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ESSAYS
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ESSAYS

CLASSICAL & MODERN

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PREFATORY NOTE

IN reprinting this Essay from *Hellenica*, I have thought it needless to repeat my original list of authorities consulted. Since the Essay was written M. Bouché-Leclercq has published his *Histoire de la Divination dans l'Antiquité*, where the bibliography of the subject is given with exhaustive fulness. The chief resources to oracles in classical authors have been long ago collected, and are now the common property of scholars. The last considerable addition to the list was made by G. Wolff, and they have been judiciously arranged by Maury and others. What is needed is a true comprehension of them, towards which less progress has been made than the ordinary reader may suppose. Even Bouché-Leclercq, whose accuracy and completeness within his self-proposed limits deserve high admiration, expressly excludes from his purview the lessons and methods of comparative ethnology, and hardly

cares to consider what those phenomena in reality *were* whose history he is recounting. I can claim little more of insight into their true nature than suffices to make me conscious of ignorance, but I have at least tried to indicate where the problems lie, and in what general directions we must look for their solution.

It is indeed true (as was remarked by several critics when this Essay first appeared) that I have kept but inadequately my implied promise of illustrating ancient mysteries by the light of modern discovery. But my difficulty lay not in the defect but in the excess of parallelism between ancient and modern phenomena. I found that each explicit reference of this kind would raise so many questions that the sequence of the narrative would soon have been destroyed. I was obliged, therefore, to content myself with suggestions and allusions—allusions necessarily obscure to the general reader in the absence of any satisfactory treatise on similar phenomena to which he could be referred. I am not without hope that this blank may before long be filled up by a research conducted on a wider and sounder basis than heretofore; and, should the sway of recognised law extend itself farther over that shadowy land, I shall be well content if this Essay

shall be thought to have aimed, however imperfectly, at that "true interrogation" which is "the half of science."

POSTSCRIPT, 1887.

Since the above words were written in 1883, some beginning of the suggested inquiries has been recorded in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. Some discussions on human automatism which will there be found are not without bearing on the subject of the present essay.

POSTSCRIPT, 1897.

The work of the Society for Psychical Research has now been pushed much further; and its *Proceedings* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.) are indispensable for persons interested in the inquiries above referred to.

CLASSICAL ESSAYS



GREEK ORACLES.

Οὐ μὲν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης
τῷ δαριζέμεναι, ἀ τε παρθένος ἡῖθεός τε,
παρθένος ἡῖθεός τ' δαρίζετον ἀλλήλοιν.

I.

It is not only in the domain of physical inquiry that the advance of knowledge is self-accelerated at every step, and the very excellence of any given work insures its own speedier supersession. All those studies which bear upon the past of mankind are every year more fully satisfying this test of the genuinely scientific character of the plan on which they are pursued. The old conception of the world's history as a collection of stories, each admitting of a complete and definitive recital, is giving way to a conception which would compare it rather with a series of imperfectly-read inscriptions, the sense of each of which is modified by the interpretations which we gradually find for its predecessors.

And of no department is this truer than of the comparative history of religions. The very idea of

such a study is of recent growth, and no sooner is the attempt made to colligate by general laws the enormous mass of the religious phenomena of the world than we find that the growing science is in danger of being choked by its own luxuriance—that each conflicting hypothesis in turn seems to draw superabundant proof from the myriad beliefs and practices of men. We may, indeed, smile at the extravagances of one-sided upholders of each successive system. We need not believe with Bishop Huet¹ that Moses was the archetype both of Adonis and of Priapus. Nor, on the other hand, need we suppose with Pierson² that Abraham himself was originally a stone god. We may leave Dozy³ to pursue his own conjecture, and deduce the strange story of the Hebrew race from their worship of the planet Saturn. Nor need the authority of Anonymus *de Rebus Incredibilibus*⁴ constrain us to accept his view that Paris was a young man who wrote essays on goddesses, and Phaethon an unsuccessful astronomer.

But it is far from easy to determine the relative validity of the theories of which these are exaggerated expressions,—to decide (for instance) what place is to be given to the direct transference of

¹ *Demonstr. Evang.* iii. 3, viii. 5.

² Ap. Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, i. 390.

³ *Ibid.* i. 262.

⁴ *Opuscula Mythologica* (Amst. 1688).

beliefs from nation to nation, to fetish-worship, to the worship of the heavenly bodies, to the deification of dead men. In an essay like the present, dealing only with a fragment of this great inquiry, it will be safest to take the most general view, and to say that man's fear and wonder invest every object, real or imaginary, which strongly impresses him,—beasts or stones, or souls and spirits, or fire and the sun in heaven,—with an intelligence and a power darkly resembling his own; and, moreover, that certain phenomena, real or supposed,—dreams and epilepsy, eclipse and thunder, sorceries and the uprising of the dead,—recur from time to time to supply him with apparent proof of the validity of his beliefs, and to modify those beliefs according to the nature of his country and his daily life. Equally natural is it that, as his social instincts develop and his power of generalisation begins, he will form such conceptions as those of a moral government of the world, of a retributory hereafter, of a single Power from which all others emanate, or into which they disappear.

Avoiding, therefore, any attempt to take a side among conflicting theories, I will draw from the considerations which follow no further moral than one which is well-nigh a truism, though too often forgotten in the heat of debate, namely, that we are assuredly not as yet in a position to pass a final judgment on the forms which religion has assumed

in the past; we have traversed too small a part of the curve of human progress to determine its true character; even yet, in fact, "we are ancients of the earth, and in the morning of the times." The difficulty of bearing this clearly in mind, great in every age, becomes greater as each age advances more rapidly in knowledge and critical power. In this respect the eighteenth century teaches us an obvious lesson. That century witnessed a marked rise in the standard of historical evidence, a marked enlightenment in dealing with the falsities and superstitions of the past. The consequence was that all things seemed explicable; that whatever could not be reduced to ordinary rules seemed only worthy of being brushed aside. Since that day the standard of evidence in history has not declined,—it has become stricter still; but at the same time the need of sympathy and insight, if we would comprehend the past, has become strongly felt, and has modified or suspended countless judgments which the philosophers of the last century delivered without misgiving. The difference between the two great critics and philosophers of France, at that day and in our own, shows at a glance the whole gulf between the two points of view. How little could the readers of Voltaire have anticipated Renan! How little could they have imagined that their master's trenchant arguments would so soon have fallen to the level of half-educated classes and half-

civilised nations,—would have been formidable only in sixpenny editions, or when translated into Hindostani for the confutation of missionary zeal!

What philosophical enlightenment was in the last century, science, physical or historical, is in our own. Science is the power to which we make our first and undoubting appeal, and we run a corresponding risk of assuming that she can already solve problems wholly, which as yet she can solve only in part,—of adopting under her supposed guidance explanations which may hereafter be seen to have the crudity and one-sidedness of Voltaire's treatment of Biblical history.

The old school of theologians were apt to assume that because all men—or all men whom they chose to count—had held a certain belief, that belief must be true. Our danger lies rather in being too ready to take for granted that when we have explained how a belief arose we have done with it altogether; that because a tenet is of savage parentage it hardly needs formal disproof. In this view the wide diffusion of a belief serves only to stamp its connection with uncivilised thought, and "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*," has become to many minds rather the badge of superstition than the test of catholic truth. That any one but ourselves should have held a creed seems to lower the average intelligence of its adherents.

Yet, on behalf of savages, and our ancestors in

general, there may be room for some apology. If we reflect how large a part of human knowledge consists of human emotion, we may even say that they possessed some forms of knowledge which we have since lost. The mind of man (it has been well said), like the earth on which he walks, undergoes perpetual processes of denudation as well as of deposit. We ourselves, as children, did in a sense know much which we know no more; our picture of the universe, incomplete and erroneous as it was, wore some true colours which we cannot now recall. The child's vivid sensibility, reflected in his vivifying imagination, is as veritably an inlet of truth as if it were an added clearness of physical vision; and though the child himself has not judgment enough to use his sensibilities aright, yet if the man is to discern the poetic truth about Nature, he will need to recall to memory his impressions as a child.

Now, in this way too, the savage is a kind of child; his beliefs are not always to be summarily referred to his ignorance; there may be something in them which we must realise in imagination before we venture to explain it away. Ethnologists have recognised the need of this difficult self-identification with the remote past, and have sometimes remarked, with a kind of envy, how much nearer the poet is than the philosopher to the savage habit of mind.

There is, however, one ancient people in whose case much of this difficulty disappears, whose re-

ligion may be traced backwards through many phases into primitive forms, while yet it is easy to study its records with a fellow-feeling which grows with our knowledge till it may approach almost to an identity of spirit. Such is the ascendancy which the great works of the Greek imagination have established over the mind of man, that it is no paradox to say that the student's danger lies often in excess rather than in defect of sympathy. He is tempted to ignore the real superiority of our own religion, morality, civilisation, and to re-shape in fancy an adult world on an adolescent ideal. But the remedy for over-estimates, as well as for under-estimates, lies in an increased definiteness of knowledge, an ever-clearer perception of the exact place in the chain of development which Greek thought and worship hold. The whole story of Greek mythology must ere long be retold in a form as deeply modified by comparative ethnology as our existing treatises have been modified by comparative philology. Such a task would be beyond my powers; but while awaiting some more comprehensive treatment of the subject by a better-qualified hand, I have in this Essay endeavoured to trace,—by suggestion rather than in detail, but with constant reference to the results of recent science,—the development and career in Greece of one remarkable class of religious phenomena which admits to some extent of separate treatment.

Greek oracles reflect for a thousand years¹ the spiritual needs of a great people. They draw their origin from an Animism² which almost all races share, and in their early and inarticulate forms they contain a record of most of the main currents in which primitive beliefs are wont to run. Afterwards—closely connected both with the idea of supernatural possession and with the name of the sun-god Apollo—they exhibit a singular fusion of nature-worship with Shahmanism or sorcery. Then, as the non-moral and naturalistic conception of the deity yields to the moral conception of him as an idealised man, the oracles reflect the change, and the Delphian god becomes in a certain sense the conscience of Greece.

A period of decline follows; due, as it would seem, partly to the depopulation and political ruin of Greece, but partly also to the indifference or scepticism of her dominant schools of philosophy. But this decline is followed by a revival which forms one of the most singular of those apparent checks which complicate the onward movement of thought by ever new modifications of the beliefs of the remote past. So far as this complex movement

¹ Roughly speaking, from 700 B.C. to 300 A.D., but the earliest oracles probably date much farther back.

² It is hardly necessary to say that by Animism is meant a belief in the existence around us of souls or spirits, whether disembodied, as ghosts, or embodied in fetishes, animals, etc. Shahmanism is a word derived from the title of the Siberian wizards, who procure by agitated trance some manifestation from their gods.

can be at present understood, it seems to have been connected among the mass of the people with the wide-spread religious upheaval of the first Christian centuries, and to have been at last put an end to by Christian baptism or sword. Among the higher minds it seems to have rested partly on a perplexed admission of certain phenomena, partly on the strongly-felt need of a permanent and elevated revelation, which yet should draw its origin from the Hellenic rather than the Hebrew past. And the story reaches a typical conclusion in the ultimate disengagement of the highest natures of declining Greece from mythology and ceremonial, and the absorption of definite dogma into an overwhelming ecstasy.

II.

The attempt to define the word "oracle" confronts us at once with the difficulties of the subject. The Latin term, indeed, which we are forced to employ, points specially to cases where the voice of God or spirit was actually heard, whether directly or through some human intermediary. But the corresponding Greek term (*μαντεῖον*) merely signifies a seat of soothsaying, a place where divinations are obtained by whatever means. And we must not regard the oracles of Greece as rare and majestic phenomena, shrines founded by a full-grown mythology for the direct habitation of a god. Rather they

are the products of a long process of evolution, the modified survivals from among countless holy places of a primitive race.

Greek literature has preserved to us abundant traces of the various causes which led to the ascription of sanctity to some particular locality. Oftenest it is some chasm or cleft in the ground, filled, perhaps, with mephitic vapours, or with the mist of a subterranean stream, or merely opening in its dark obscurity an inlet into the mysteries of the underworld. Such was the chasm of the Clarian,¹ the Delian,² the Delphian Apollo; and such the oracle of the prophesying nymphs on Cithæron.³ Such was Trophonius' cave,⁴ and his own name perhaps is only a synonym for the Mother Earth, "in many names the one identity," who nourishes at once and reveals.⁵

Sometimes—as for instance at Megara,⁶ Sicyon, Orchomenus, Laodicea—the sanctity gathers around some *βαίτυλος* or fetish-stone, fashioned, it may be,

¹ Iambl. *de Myst.* p. 74.

² Lebègue, *Recherches sur Délos*, p. 89.

³ Paus. ix. 3. See also Paus. v. 14, for a legend of an oracle of Earth herself at Olympia.

⁴ Paus. ix. 39.

⁵ Τροφώνιος from τρέφω. The visitor, who lay a long time, οὐ μάλ' ἀστυφρονῶν ἐναργῶς εἶτ' ἐγρήγορεν εἰτ' ὠνειροπόλει (Plut. *de Genio Socratis*, 22), had doubtless been partially asphyxiated. St. Patrick's Purgatory was perhaps conducted on the same plan.

⁶ Paus. i. 43, and for further references on *bætyls* see Lebègue, p. 85. See also Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, p. 225.

into a column or pyramid, and probably in most cases identified at first with the god himself, though, after the invention of statuary, its significance might be obscured or forgotten. Such stones outlast all religions, and remain for us in their rude shapelessness the oldest memorial of the aspirations or the fears of man.

Sometimes the sacred place was merely some favourite post of observation of the flight of birds, or of lightning, like Teiresias' "ancient seat of augury,"¹ or the hearth² from which, before the sacred embassy might start for Delphi, the Pythaists watched above the crest of Parnes for the summons of the heavenly flame.

Or it might be merely some spot where the divination from burnt-offerings seemed unusually true and plain,—at Olympia, for instance, where, as Pindar tells us, "soothsayers divining from sacrifice make trial of Zeus who lightens clear." It is needless to speak at length of groves and streams and mountain-summits, which in every region of the world have seemed to bring the unseen close to man by waving mystery, or by rushing murmur, or by nearness to the height of heaven.³ It is enough to

¹ Soph. *Ant.* 1001; Paus. ix. 16; and cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 841.

² Strabo, ix. p. 619. They watched ἀπὸ τῆς ἐσχάρας τοῦ ἀστραπαίου Διὸς. See also Eur. *Ion.* 295. Even a place where lots were customarily drawn might become a seat of oracle.—Paus. vii. 25.

³ There is little trace in Greece of "weather-oracles,"—such as the Blocksberg,—hills deriving a prophetic reputation from the

understand that in Greece, as in other countries over which successive waves of immigration have passed, the sacred places were for the most part selected for primitive reasons, and in primitive times; then as more civilised races succeeded and Apollo came,—whence or in what guise cannot here be discussed,—the old shrines were dedicated to new divinities, the old symbols were metamorphosed or disappeared. The fetish-stones were crowned by statues, or replaced by statues and buried in the earth.¹ The Sibyls died in the temples, and the sun-god's island holds the sepulchre of the moon-maidens of the northern sky.²

It is impossible to arrange in quite logical order phenomena which touch each other at so many points, but in making our transition from these impersonal or hardly personal oracles of divination to the "voice-oracles"³ of classical times, we may

indications of coming rain, etc., drawn from clouds on their summits. The sanctity of Olympus, as is well known, is connected with a supposed elevation above all elemental disturbances.

¹ Pind. *Ol.* viii. 3, and for further references see Hermann, *Griech. Ant.* ii. 247. Maury (ii. 447) seems to deny this localisation on insufficient grounds.

² The Hyperboreæ, see reff. ap. Lebègue, p. 69. M. Bouché-Leclercq's discussion (vol. ii.) of the Sibylline legends is more satisfactory than that of Klausen (*Æneas und die Penaten*, p. 107, foll.) He describes the Sibylline type as "une personnification gracieuse de la mantique intuitive, intermédiaire entre le babil inconscient de la nymphe Écho et la sagacité inhumaine de la Sphinx."

³ Χρησμοί φθεγματικοί.

first mention the well-known Voice or Rumour which as early as Homer runs heaven-sent through the multitude of men, or sometimes prompts to revolution by "the word of Zeus."¹

To this we may add the belief that words spoken at some critical and culminant, or even at some arbitrarily-chosen moment, have a divine significance. We find some trace of this in the oracle of Teiresias,² and it appears in a strange form in an old oracle said to have been given to Homer, which tells him to beware of the moment when some young children shall ask him a riddle which he is unable to answer.³ Cases of omens given by a chance word in classical times are too familiar to need further reference.⁴ What we have to notice here is, that this casual method of learning the will of heaven was systematised into a practice at certain oracular temples, where the applicant made his sacrifice, stopped his ears, went into the market-place, and accepted the first words

¹ *θσσα, φήμη, κληδών, ὁμφή*—*Il.* ii. 93; *Herod.* ix. 100; *Od.* iii. 215, etc. These words are probably used sometimes for regular oracular communications.

² *Od.* xi. 126.

³ *ἀλλὰ νέων παίδων αἰνιγμα φύλαξαι*. *Paus.* x. 24; *Anth. Pal.* xiv. 66. This conundrum, when it was at length put to Homer, was of so vulgar a character that no real discredit is reflected on the Father of Poetry by his perplexity as to its solution. (*Homeri et Hesiodi certamen, ad fin.*) *Heraclitus*, however, used the fact to illustrate the limitation of even the highest human powers.

⁴ *Herodotus* ix. 91, may be selected as an example of a happy chance in *forcing* an omen.

he happened to hear as a divine intimation. We hear of oracles on this pattern at Memphis,¹ and at Pharæ in Achæa.²

From these voices, which, though clearly audible, are, as it were, unowned and impersonal, we may pass to voices which have a distinct personality, but are heard only by the sleeping ear. Dreams of departed friends are likely to be the first phenomenon which inspires mankind with the idea that they can hold converse with a spiritual world. We find dreams at the very threshold of the theology of almost all nations, and accordingly it does not surprise us to find Homer asserting that dreams come from Zeus,³ or painting, with a pathos which later literature has never surpassed, the strange vividness and agonising insufficiency of these fugitive visions of the night.⁴

And throughout Greek literature presaging dreams which form, as Plutarch says, "an unfixed and wandering oracle of Night and Moon"⁵ are

¹ Dio Chrys. *ad Alex.* 32, 13, παῖδες ἀπαγγέλλουσι παίζοντες τὸ δοκοῦν τῷ θεῷ.

² Paus. vii. 22.

³ *Il.* i. 63. Or from Hermes, or earth, or the gods below.

⁴ *Il.* xxiii. 97. If we accept the theory of an older Achilleid we find the importance of augury proper decreasing, of dreams increasing, in the Homeric poems themselves. Geddes, *Hom. Probl.* p. 186; cf. Mure, *Hist. Gr. Lit.* i. 492. Similarly Apollo's darts grow more gentle, and his visitations more benign.—Geddes, p. 140.

⁵ Plut. *Ser. Num. Vind.* 22.

abundant in every form, from the high behest laid on Bellerophon "when in the dark of night stood by him the shadowy-shielded maid, and from a dream, suddenly, a waking vision she became,"¹ down to the dreams in the temples of Serapis or of Aesculapius which Aristides the Rhetorician has embalmed for us in his Sacred Orations,—the dream which "seemed to indicate a bath, yet not without a certain ambiguity," or the dream which left him in distressing uncertainty whether he were to take an emetic or no.²

And just as we have seen that the custom of observing birds, or of noting the omens of casual speech, tended to fix itself permanently in certain shrines, so also dream-oracles, or temples where the inquirer slept in the hope of obtaining an answer from the god seen in vision, or from some other vision sent by him, were one of the oldest forms of oracular seats. Brizo, a dream-prophetess, preceded Apollo at Delos.³ A similar legend contrasts "the divination of darkness" at Delphi with Apollo's clear prophetic song.⁴ Night herself was believed to send visions at Megara,⁵ and coins of Commodus still show us her erect and shrouded figure, the torches that glimmer in her shade. Amphiaraus,⁶ Amphil-

¹ Pind. *Ol.* xiii. 100.

² Ar. *Rhet.* vol. i. p. 275 (Dind.), ἔχον μὲν τινα ἔννοιαν λούτρον, οὐ μέντοι χωρὶς γε ὑπονοίας, and i. 285.

³ Athen. viii. 2, and see Lebègue, p. 218; comp. Aesch. *Ag.* 275.

⁴ Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 1234 foll. ⁵ Paus. i. 40. ⁶ Paus. i. 34.

chus,¹ Charon,² Pasiphae,³ Herakles,⁴ Dionysus,⁵ and above all Asklepios,⁶ gave answers after this fashion, mainly, but not entirely, in cases of sickness. The prevalence of heroes, rather than gods, as the givers of oracles in dreams seems still further to indicate the immediate derivation of this form of revelation from the accustomed appearance of departed friends in sleep.

The next step takes us to the most celebrated class of oracles,—those in which the prophetess, or more rarely the prophet, gives vent in agitated trance to the words which she is inspired to utter.⁷ We encounter here the phenomena of possession, so familiar to us in the Bible, and of which theology still maintains the genuineness, while science would explain them by delirium, hysteria, or epilepsy. It

¹ Dio Cass. lxxii. 7.

² Eustath. *Schol. ad Dionys. Perieg.* 1153.

³ Cic. *de Div.* i. 43 ; Plut. *Agis* 9, and cf. Maury, ii. 453.

⁴ Paus. ix. 24, comp. inscr. ap. G. Wolff, *de Noviss.* p. 29, and see Plut. *de Malign. Herod.* 31, for the dream of Leonidas in Herakles' temple.

⁵ Paus. x. 33.

⁶ Ar. *Rhet. passim* ; Iambl. *Myst.* 3, 3, etc. See also Val. Max. i. 7 ; Diod. Sic. v. 62 ; Ar. *Rhet. Sacr. Serm.* iii. 311, for dreams sent by Athene, the Soteres, Hemithea. Further references will be found in Maury, iii. 456, and for the relation of Apollo to dreams see Bouché-Leclercq, i. 204.

⁷ Pindar's phrase (for the prophecy of Iamus), *φωνὰν ἀκόνειν ψευδέων ἀγνωστον*, *Ol.* vi. 66, reminds us of Socrates' inward monitor. The expressions used about the Pythia vary from this conception of mere *clairaudience* to the idea of an absolute *possession*, which for the time holds the individuality of the prophetess entirely in abeyance.

was this phenomenon, connected first, as Pausanias tells us,¹ with the Apolline oracles, which gave a wholly new impressiveness to oracular replies. No longer confined to simple affirmation and negation, or to the subjective and ill-remembered utterances of a dream, they were now capable of embracing all topics, and of being preserved in writing as a revelation of general applicability. These oracles of inspiration, — taken in connection with the oracles uttered by visible phantoms, which become prominent at a later era,—may be considered as marking the highest point of development to which Greek oracles attained. It will be convenient to defer our consideration of some of these phenomena till we come to the great controversy between Porphyry and Eusebius, in which they were for the first time fully discussed. But there is one early oracle of the dead, different in some respects from any that succeeded it,² which presents so many points for notice that a

¹ Paus. i. 34. We should have expected this prophetic frenzy to have been connected with Bacchus or the Nymphs rather than with Apollo, and it is possible that there may have been some transference of the phenomena from the one worship to the other. The causes which have determined the attributes of the Greek deities are often too fanciful to admit of explanation now.

² The distinction drawn by Nägelsbach between this and other "Todtenorakeln" (*Nachkom. Theologie*, p. 189) is surely exaggerated. See Klausen, *Aeneas und die Penaten*, p. 129 foll., for other legends connecting Odysseus with early necromancy, and on this general subject see Herod. v. 92; Eur. *Alc.* 1131; Plat. *Leg.* x. 909; Plut. *Cim.* 6, *de Ser. Num. Vind.* 17; Tylor, *Prim. Cult.* ii. 41. The fact, on which Nägelsbach dwells, that Odysseus, after

few reflections on the state of belief which it indicates will assist us in comprehending the nature of the elevation of Greek faith which was afterwards effected under the influence of Delphi.

For this,—the first oracle of which we have a full account, —the descent of Odysseus to the underworld, “to consult the soul of the Theban Teiresias,” shows in a way which it would be hard to parallel elsewhere the possible co-existence in the same mind of the creed and practices of the lowest races with a majesty, a pathos, a power, which human genius has never yet overpassed. The eleventh book of the *Odyssey* is steeped in the Animism of barbarous peoples. The Cimmerian entrance to the world of souls is the close parallel (to take one instance among many) of the extreme western cape of Vanua Levi, a calm and solemn place of cliff and forest, where the souls of the Fijian dead embark for the judgment-seat of Ndengei, and whither the living come on pilgrimage, thinking to see ghosts and gods.¹ Homer’s ghosts cheep and twitter precisely as the shadow-

consulting Teiresias, satisfied his affection and his curiosity by interviews with other ghosts in no way alters the original injunction laid on him, the purport of his journey—*ψυχῇ χρησόμενον Θηβαίου Τειρεσίου*. Nägelsbach’s other argument, that in later times we hear only of a dream-oracle, not an apparition-oracle, of Teiresias seems to me equally weak. Readers of Pausanias must surely feel what a chance it is which has determined the oracles of which we have heard.

¹ *Prim. Cult.* i. 403.

souls of the Algonquin Indians chirp like crickets, and Polynesian spirits speak in squeaking tones, and the accent of the ancestral Zulu, when he reappears on earth, has earned for him the name of Whistler.¹ The expedition of Odysseus is itself paralleled by the exploit of Ojibwa, the eponymous hero of the Ojibbeways, of the Finnish hero Wainamoinen, and of many another savage chief. The revival of the ghosts with blood, itself closely paralleled in old Teutonic mythologies,² speaks of the time when the soul is conceived as feeding on the fumes and shadows of earthly food, as when the Chinese beat the drum which summons ancestral souls to supper, and provide a pail of gruel and a spoon for the greater convenience of any ancestor who may unfortunately have been deprived of his head.³

Nay, even the inhabitants of that underworld are only the semblances of once living men. "They themselves," in the terrible words of the opening sentence of the *Iliad*, "have been left a prey to dogs and every bird." Human thought has not yet reached a point at which spirit could be conceived of as more than the shadow of matter.

And if further evidence were needed, the oracle of Teiresias himself—opening like a chasm into Hades through the sunlit soil of Greece—reveals unwittingly all the sadness which underlies that freshness and power, the misgiving which so often

¹ *Prim. Cult.* ii. 42.

² *Ibid.* ii. 346.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 30.

unites the savage and the philosopher, the man who comes before religions and the man who comes after them, in the gloom of the same despair. Himself alone in his wisdom among the ineffectual shades, Teiresias offers to Odysseus, in the face of all his unjust afflictions, no prevention and no cure; "of honey-sweet return thou askest, but by God's will bitter shall it be;"—for life's struggle he has no remedy but to struggle to the end, and for the wandering hero he has no deeper promise than the serenity of a gentle death.

And yet Homer "made the theogony of the Greeks."¹ And Homer, through the great ages which followed him, not only retained, but deepened his hold on the Hellenic spirit. It was no mere tradition, it was the ascendancy of that essential truth and greatness in Homer, which we still so strongly feel, which was the reason why he was clung to and invoked and explained and allegorised by the loftiest minds of Greece in each successive age; why he was transformed by Polygnotus, transformed by Plato, transformed by Porphyry. Nay, even in our own day,—and this is not the least significant fact in religious history,—we have seen one of the most dominant, one of the most religious intellects of our century, falling under the same spell, and extracting from Homer's almost savage

¹ Herod. ii. 53, οὗτοι δέ (Homer and Hesiod) εἰσι οἱ ποιήσαντες θεογονίην "Ελλήσι, κ.τ. λ.

animism the full-grown mysteries of the Christian faith.

So dangerous would it be to assume such a congruence throughout the whole mass of the thought of any epoch, however barbarous, that the baseness or falsity of some of its tenets should be enough to condemn the rest unheard. So ancient, so innate in man is the power of apprehending by emotion and imagination aspects of reality for which a deliberate culture might often look in vain. To the dictum,—so true though apparently so paradoxical,—which asserts “that the mental condition of the lower races is the key to poetry,” we may reply with another apparent paradox—that poetry is the only thing which every age is certain to recognise as truth.

Having thus briefly considered the nature of each of the main classes of oracular response, it is natural to go on to some inquiry into the history of the leading shrines where these responses were given. The scope of this essay does not admit of a detailed notice of each of the very numerous oracular seats of which some record has reached us.¹ But before passing on to Delphi, I must dwell on two cases of special interest, where recent explorations have brought us nearer than elsewhere to what may be

¹ The number of Greek oracular seats, with the Barbarian seats known to the Greeks, has been estimated at 260, or an even larger number; but of very many of these we know no more than the name.

called the private business of an oracle, or to the actual structure of an Apolline sanctuary.

The oracle of Zeus at Dodona takes the highest place among all the oracles which answered by signs rather than by inspired speech.¹ It claimed to be the eldest of all, and we need not therefore wonder that its phenomena present an unusual confluence of streams of primitive belief. The first mention of Dodona,²—in that great invocation of Achilles which is one of the glimpses which Homer gives us of a world far earlier than his own,—seems to indicate that it was then a seat of dream-oracles, where the rude Selloi perhaps drew from the earth on which they slept such visions as she sends among men. But in the *Odyssey*³ and in Hesiod⁴ the oracle is spoken of as having its seat among the leaves, or in the hollow or base of an oak, and this is the idea which prevailed in classical times.⁵ The doves,⁶—if doves there were, and not merely priestesses, whose name, Peleiades, may be derived from some other root,⁷—introduce another element of complexity.

¹ Strab. viii. *Fragm.* ἐχρησµύδει δ' οὐ διὰ λόγων ἀλλὰ διὰ τινων συμβόλων, ὥσπερ τὸ ἐν Λιβύῃ Ἀμμωνιακόν. So Suid. *in voc.* Δωδώνη, etc.

² *Il.* xvi. 233.

³ *Od.* xiv. 327, xix. 296.

⁴ Hes. *Fr.* 39. 7, ναῖόν τ' ἐν πυθμένι φηγοῦ. See Plat. *Phaedr.* 275.

⁵ Aesch. *Prom.* 832; Soph. *Trach.* 172 and 1167.

⁶ See Herod. ii. 54, and comp. *Od.* xii. 63.

⁷ See Herm. *Griech. Antiq.* ii. 250. Dr. Robertson Smith suggests "that the Dove-soothsayers were so named from their *croon* . . . and that the *μελισσα* (the Pythia) in like manner is the humming priestess." — *Journal of Philology*, vol. xiv. p. 120.

Oracles were also given at Dodona by means of lots,¹ and by the falling of water.² Moreover, German industry has established the fact, that at Dodona it thunders on more days than anywhere else in Europe, and that no peals are louder anywhere than those which echo among the Acroceraunian mountains. It is tempting to derive the word Dodona from the sound of a thunderclap, and to associate this old Pelasgic sanctuary with the propitiation of elemental deities in their angered hour.³ But the notices of the oracle in later days are perplexingly at variance with all these views. They speak mainly of oracles given by the sound of caldrons, — struck, according to Strabo,⁴ by knuckle-

¹ Cic. *de Div.* ii. 32.

² Serv. *ad Aen.* iii. 466.

³ I do not think that we can get beyond some such vague conjecture as this, and A. Mommsen and Schmidt's elaborate calculations as to months of maximum frequency of thunderclaps and centres of maximum frequency of earthquakes, as determining the time of festivals or the situation of oracular temples, seem to me to be quite out of place. If a savage possessed the methodical patience of a German observer, he would be a savage no more. *Savants* must be content to leave Aristotle's *τύχη καὶ τὸ αὐτόματον*, — chance and spontaneity, — as causes of a large part of the action of primitive men.

The dictum of Götte (*Delphische Orakel*, p. 13) seems to me equally unproveable: "Dodona, wohin die schwarzen aegyptischen Tauben geflogen kamen, ist wohl unbestreitbar eine aegyptische Cultstätte, die Schwesteranstalt von Ammonium, beide Thchens Töchter." The geographical position of Dodona is much against this view, the doves are very problematical, and the possible existence of a primitive priesthood in the Selloi is no proof of an Egyptian influence.

⁴ Strab. lib. vii. *Fragm.* ap. Hermann, *Griech. Ant.* ii. 251, where see further citations.

bones attached to a wand held by a statue. The temple is even said to have been *made* of caldrons,¹ or at least they were so arranged, as a certain Demon tells us,² that "all in turn, when one was smitten, the caldrons of Dodona rang." The perpetual sound thus caused is alluded to in a triumphant tone by other writers,³ but it is the more difficult to determine in what precise way the will of Zeus was understood.

Among such a mass of traditions, it is of course easy to find analogies. The doves may be compared to the hissing ducks of the Abipones, which were connected with the souls of the dead,⁴ or with the

¹ Steph. Byz. *s. voc.* Δωδώνη, quoted by Carapanos, in whose monograph on Dodona citations on all these points will be found.

² Müller, *Fragm. Hist. Gr.* iii. 125.

³ Callim. *Hymn. in Del.* 286; Philostr. *Imag.* ii. 33 (a slightly different account).

⁴ *Prim. Cult.* ii. 6. The traces of animal worship in Greece are many and interesting, but are not closely enough connected with our present subject to be discussed at length. Apollo's possible characters, as the Wolf, the Locust, or the Fieldmouse (or the Slayer of wolves, of locusts, or of fieldmice), have not perceptibly affected his oracles. Still less need we be detained by the fish-tailed Eurynome, or the horse-faced Demeter (Paus. viii. 41, 42). And although from the time when the boy-prophet Iamus lay among the wall-flowers, and "the two bright-eyed serpents fed him with the harmless poison of the bee" (Pind. *Ol.* vi. 28), snakes appear frequently in connection with prophetic power, their worship falls under the head of divination rather than of oracles. The same remark may be made of ants, cats, and cows. The bull Apis occupies a more definite position, but though he was visited by Greeks, his worship was not a product of Greek thought. The nearest Greek approach, perhaps, to an animal-oracle was at the fount of Myre in Cilicia (Plin. *H.N.* xxxii. 2), where fish swam up to cat or reject the food thrown to them. "Diripere eos carnes objectas

doves in Popayan, which are spared as inspired by departed souls. The tree-worship opens up lines of thought too well known for repetition. We may liken the Dodonæan "voiceful oak" to the tamarisks of Beersheba, and the oak of Shechem,—its whisper to the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees," which prompted Israel to war,¹ and so on down the long train of memories to Joan of Arc hanging with garlands the fairies' beech in the woods of Domremy, and telling her persecutors that if they would set her in a forest once more she would hear the heavenly voices plain.² Or we may prefer, with another school, to trace this tree also back to the legendary Ygdrassil, "the celestial tree of the Aryan family," with its spreading branches of the stratified clouds of heaven. One legend at least points to the former interpretation as the more natural. For just as a part of the ship Argo, keel or prow, was made of the Dodonæan oak, and Argo's crew heard with astonishment the ship herself prophesy to them on the sea :—

laetum est consultantibus," says Pliny, "caudis abigere dirum." The complaint of a friend of Plutarch's (*Quæst. conviv.* iv. 4) "that it was impossible to obtain from fishes a single instructive look or sound," is thus seen to have been exaggerated. And it appears that live snakes were kept in the cave of Trophonius (Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* viii. 19), in order to inspire terror in visitors, who were instructed to appease them with cakes (Suid. s. v. *μελιτοῦττα*).

¹ 2 Sam. v. 24.

² "Dixit quod si esset in uno nemore bene audiret voces venientes ad eam."—On Tree-worship, see Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, p. 206 foll.

"But Jason and the builder, Argus, knew
Whereby the prow foretold things strange and new;
Nor wondered aught, but thanked the gods therefore,
As far astern they left the Mysian shore,"¹—

so do we find a close parallel to this among the Siamese,² who believe that the inhabiting nymphs of trees pass into the guardian spirits of boats built with their wood, to which they continue to sacrifice.

Passing on to the answers which were given at this shrine, we find that at Dodona,³ as well as at Delphi,⁴ human sacrifice is to be discerned in the background. But in the form in which the legend reaches us, its horror has been sublimed into pathos. Coresus, priest of Bacchus at Calydon, loved the maiden Callirhoe in vain. Bacchus, indignant at his servant's repulse, sent madness and death on Calydon. The oracle of Dodona announced that Coresus must sacrifice Callirhoe, or some one who would die for her. No one was willing to die for her, and she stood up beside the altar to be slain. But when Coresus looked on her his love overcame his anger, and he slew himself in her stead. Then her heart turned to him, and beside the fountain to which her name was given she died by her own hand, and followed him to the underworld.

¹ Morris' *Life and Death of Jason*, Book iv. *ad fin.*

² *Prim. Cult.* ii. 198.

³ Paus. vii. 21.

⁴ Eus. *Pr. Ev.* v. 27, *παρθένον Αλκυτίδαν κλήρος καλεῖ*, etc. See also the romantic story of Melanippus and Comætho, Paus. vii. 19.

There is another legend of Dodona¹ to which the student of oracles may turn with a certain grim satisfaction at the thought that the ambiguity of style which has so often baffled him did once at least carry its own penalty with it. Certain Bœotian envoys, so the story runs, were told by Myrtilé, the priestess of Dodona, "that it would be best for them to do the most impious thing possible." The Bœotians immediately threw the priestess into a caldron of boiling water, remarking that they could not think of anything much more impious than *that*.

The ordinary business of Dodona, however, was of a less exciting character. M. Carapanos has discovered many tablets on which the inquiries of visitors to the oracle were inscribed, and these give a picture, sometimes grotesque, but oftener pathetic, of the simple faith of the rude Epirots who dwelt round about the shrine. The statuette of an acrobat hanging to a rope shows that the "Dodonæan Pelasgian Zeus" did not disdain to lend his protection to the least dignified forms of jeopardy to life and limb. A certain Agis asks "whether he has lost his blankets and pillows himself, or some one outside has stolen them." An unknown woman asks simply how she may be healed of her disease. Lysanias asks if he is indeed the father of the child which his wife Nyla is soon to bear. Evandrus and his

¹ Ephor. ad Strab. ix. 2; Heracl. Pont. *Fragm. Hist. Gr.* ii. 198; Proclus, *Chrest.* ii. 248, and see Carapanos.

wife, in broken dialect, seek to know "by what prayer or worship they may fare best now and for ever." And there is something strangely pathetic in finding on a broken plate of lead the imploring inquiry of the fierce and factious Corcyreans,—made, alas! in vain,—“to what god or hero offering prayer and sacrifice they might live together in unity?”¹ “For the men of that time,” says Plato,² “since they were not wise as ye are nowadays, it was enough in their simplicity to listen to oak or rock, if only these told them true.” To those rude tribes, indeed, their voiceful trees were the one influence which lifted them above barbarism and into contact with the surrounding world. Again and again Dodona was ravaged,³ but so long as the oak was standing the temple rose anew. When at last an Illyrian bandit cut down the oak⁴ the presence of Zeus was gone, and the desolate Thesprotian valley has known since then no other sanctity, and has found no other voice.

I proceed to another oracular seat, of great mythical celebrity, though seldom alluded to in classical times, to which a recent exploration⁵ has given a striking interest, bringing us, as it were, into direct connection across so many ages with the birth and advent of a god.

¹ Τίτι κα θεῶν ἢ ἡρώων θύοντες καὶ ὠχόμενοι ὁμονοοῖεν ἐπὶ τὰ γὰθόν.

² Phædr. 275.

³ Strab. vii. 6; Polyb. ix. 67, and cf. Wolff, *de Noviss.* p. 13.

⁴ Serv. *ad Aen.* iii. 466.

⁵ *Recherches sur Délos*, par J. A. Lebègue, 1876.

On the slope of Cynthus, near the mid-point of the Isle of Delos, ten gigantic blocks of granite, covered with loose stones and the débris of ages, form a rude vault, half hidden in the hill. The islanders call it the "dragon's cave;" travellers had taken it for the remains of a fortress or of a reservoir. It was reserved for two French savants to show how much knowledge the most familiar texts have yet to yield when they are meditated on by minds prepared to compare and to comprehend. A familiar passage in Homer,¹ illustrated by much ancient learning and by many calculations of his own, suggested to M. Burnouf, Director of the French School of Archæology at Athens, that near this point had been a primitive post of observation of the heavens; nay, that prehistoric men had perhaps measured their seasons by the aid of some rude instrument in this very cave. An equally familiar line of Virgil,² supported by some expressions in a Homeric hymn, led M. Lebègue to the converging conjecture that at this spot the Delian oracle had its seat; that here it was that Leto's long wanderings ended, and Apollo and Artemis were born. Every schoolboy has learnt by heart the sounding lines which tell how Aeneas "venerated the temple built of ancient stone," and how at the god's unseen coming "threshold and laurel trembled, and all the

¹ *Od.* xv. 403. Em. Burnouf, *Revue Archéologique*, Aug. 8, 1873.

² *Aen.* iii. 84; *Hom. Hymn. Del.* 15-18, and 79-81.

mountain round about was moved." But M. Lebègue was the first to argue hence with confidence that the oracle must have been upon the mountain and not on the coast, and that those ancient stones, like the Cyclopean treasure-house of Mycenæ, might be found and venerated still. So far as a reader can judge without personal survey, these expectations have been amply fulfilled.¹ At each step M. Lebègue's researches revealed some characteristic of an oracular shrine. In a walled external space were the remains of a marble base on which a three-legged instrument had been fixed by metal claws. Then came a transverse wall, shutting off the temple within, which looks westward, so that the worshipper, as he approaches, may face the east. The floor of this temple is reft by a chasm,—the continuation of a ravine which runs down the hill, and across which the sanctuary has been intentionally built. And in the inner recess is a rough block of granite, smoothed on the top, where a statue has stood. The statue has probably been knocked into the chasm by a rock falling through the partly-open roof. Its few fragments show that it represented a young god. The stone itself is probably a fetish, surviving, with the Cyclopean stones which make the vault above it,

¹ M. Homolle (*Fouilles de Délos*, 1879) gives no direct opinion on the matter, but his researches indirectly confirm M. Lebègue's view, in so far as that among the numerous inscriptions, etc., which he has found among the ruins of the temple of Apollo on the coast, there seems to be no trace of oracular response or inquiry.

from a date perhaps many centuries before the Apolline religion came. This is all, but this is enough. For we have here in narrow compass all the elements of an oracular shrine; the westward aspect, the sacred enclosure, the tripod, the sanctuary, the chasm, the fetish-stone, the statue of a youthful god. And when the situation is taken into account, the correspondence with the words both of Virgil and of the Homerid becomes so close as to be practically convincing. It is true that the smallness of scale,—the sanctuary measures some twenty feet by ten,—and the remote archaism of the structure, from which all that was beautiful, almost all that was Hellenic, has long since disappeared, cause at first a shock of disappointment like that inspired by the size of the citadel, and the character of the remains at Hissarlik. Yet, on reflection, this seeming incongruity is an additional element of proof. There is something impressive in the thought that amidst all the marble splendour which made Delos like a jewel in the sea, it was this cavernous and prehistoric sanctuary, as mysterious to Greek eyes as to our own, which their imagination identified with that earliest temple which Leto promised, in her hour of trial, that Apollo's hands should build. This, the one remaining seat of oracle out of the hundreds which Greece contained, was the one sanctuary which the Far-darter himself had wrought;—no wonder that his mighty workmanship has out-

lasted the designs of men! All else is gone. The temples, the amphitheatres, the colonnades, which glittered on every crest and coign of the holy island, have sunk into decay. But he who sails among the isles of Greece may still watch around sea-girt Delos "the dark wave welling shoreward beneath the shrill and breezy air;"¹ he may still note at sunrise, as on that sunrise when the god was born, "the whole island abloom with shafts of gold, as a hill's crested summit blooms with woodland flowers."² "And thou thyself, lord of the silver bow," he may exclaim with the Homerid in that burst of exultation in which the uniting Ionian race seems to leap to the consciousness of all its glory in an hour,—“thou walkedst here in very presence, on Cynthus' leafy crown!”

“Ah, many a forest, many a peak is thine,
On many a promontory stands thy shrine,
But best and first thy love, thy home, is here;
Of all thine isles thy Delian isle most dear;—
There the long-robed Ionians, man and maid,
Press to thy feast in all their pomp arrayed,—
To thee, to Artemis, to Leto pay
The heartfelt honour on thy natal day;—
Immortal would he deem them, ever young,
Who then should walk the Ionian folk among,
Should those tall men, those stately wives behold,
Swift ships seafaring and long-garnered gold:—

¹ *Hymn. Del.* 27.

² *Ibid.* 133-134.

But chiefliest far his eyes and ears would meet
Of sights, of sounds most marvellously sweet,
The Delian girls amid the thronging stir,
The loved hand-maidens of the Far-darter ;
The Delian girls, whose chorus, long and long,
Chants to the god his strange, his ancient song,—
Till whoso hears it deems his own voice sent
Thro' the azure air that music softly blent,
So close it comes to each man's heart, and so
His own soul feels it and his glad tears flow."

Such was the legend of the indigenous, the Hellenic Apollo. But the sun does not rise over one horizon alone, and the glory of Delos was not left uncontested or unshared. Another hymn, of inferior poetical beauty, but of equal, if not greater, authority among the Greeks, relates how Apollo descended from the Thessalian Olympus, and sought a place where he might found his temple: how he was refused by Tilphussa, and selected Delphi; and how, in the guise of a dolphin, he led thither a crew of Cretans to be the servants of his shrine. With this hymn, so full of meaning for the comparative mythologist, we are here only concerned as introducing us to Apollo in the aspect in which we know him best, "giving his answers from the laurel-wood, beneath the hollows of Parnassus' hill."¹

At Delphi, as at Dodona, we seem to trace the relics of many a form of worship and divination which we cannot now distinctly recall. From that

¹ *Hymn. Pyth.* 214.

deep cleft "in rocky Pytho," Earth, the first prophetess, gave her earliest oracle,¹ in days which were already a forgotten antiquity to the heroic age of Greece. The maddening vapour, which was supposed to rise from the chasm,² belongs to nymph-inspiration rather than to the inspiration of Apollo. At Delphi, too, was the most famous of all fetish-stones, believed in later times to be the centre of the earth.³ At Delphi divination from the sacrifice of goats reached an immemorial antiquity.⁴ Delphi, too, was an ancient centre of divination by fire, a tradition which survived in the name of Pyrcon,⁵ given to Hephaestus' minister, while Hephaestus shared with Earth the possession of the shrine, and in the mystic title of the Flame-kindlers,⁶ assigned in oracular utterances to the Delphian folk. At Delphi, too, in ancient days, the self-moved lots

¹ Aesch. *Eum.* 2; Paus. x. 5; cf. Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 1225 *sqq.*

² Strabo, ix. p. 419, etc. In a paper read before the British Archæological Association, March 5, 1879, Dr. Phené has given an interesting account of subterranean chambers at Delphi, which seem to indicate that gases from the subterranean Castalia were received in a chamber where the Pythia may have sat. But in the absence of direct experiment this whole question is physiologically very obscure. It is even possible, as M. Bouché-Leclercq urges, that the Pythia's frenzy may be a survival from a previous Dionysiac worship at Delphi, and thus originally traceable to a quite orthodox intoxicant.

³ Paus. x. 16, etc.

⁴ Diod. Sic. xvi. 26. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* vii. 56) ascribes the invention of this mode of divination to Delphos, a son of Apollo.

⁵ Paus. x. 5.

⁶ Plut. *Pyth.* 24.

sprang in the goblet in obedience to Apollo's will.¹ The waving of the Delphic laurel,² which in later times seemed no more than a token of the wind and spiritual stirring which announced the advent of the god, was probably the relic of an ancient tree-worship, like that of Dodona,³ and Daphne, priestess of Delphi's primeval Earth-oracle,⁴ is but one more of the old symbolical figures that have melted back again into impersonal nature at the appearing of the God of Day. Lastly, at Delphi is laid the scene of the sharpest conflict between the old gods and the new. Whatever may have been the meaning of the Python,—whether he were a survival of snake-worship, or a winding stream which the sun's rays dry into rotting marsh, or only an emblem of the cloud which trails across the sunlit heaven,—his slaughter by Apollo was an integral part of the early legend, and at the Delphian festivals the changes of the "Pythian strain" commemorated for many a year that perilous encounter,—the god's descent into the battlefield, his shout of summons,

¹ Suidas, iii. p. 237; cf. Callim. *Hymn. in Apoll.* 45, etc.

² Ar. *Plut.* 213; Callim. *Hymn. in Apoll.* 1, etc.

³ I cannot, however, follow M. Maury (*Religions de la Grèce*, ii. 442) in supposing (as he does in the case of the Delian laurel, *Aen.* iii. 73) that such tree-movements need indicate an ancient habit of divining from their sound. The idea of a wind accompanying divine manifestations seems more widely diffused in Greece than the Dodonæan idea of vocal trees. Cf. (for instance) Plut. *De Def. orac.* of the Delphian adytum, εὐωδίας ἀναπύμπλαται καὶ πνεύματος.

⁴ Paus. x. 5.

his cry of conflict, his paean of victory, and then the gnashing of the dragon's teeth in his fury, the hiss of his despair.¹ And the mythology of a later age has connected with this struggle the first ideas of moral conflict and expiation which the new religion had to teach; has told us that the victor needed purification after his victory; that he endured and was forgiven; and that the god himself first wore his laurel-wreath as a token of supplication, and not of song.²

With a similar ethical purpose the simple narrative of the Homerid has been transformed into a legend³ of a type which meets us often in the middle ages, but which wears a deeper pathos when it occurs in the midst of Hellenic gladness and youth,—the legend of Trophonius and Agamedes, the artificers who built the god's home after his heart's desire, and whom he rewarded with the guerdon that is above all other recompense, a speedy and a gentle death.

In the new temple at any rate, as rebuilt in historic times, the moral significance of the Apolline religion was expressed in unmistakable imagery. Even as "four great zones of sculpture" girded the hall of Camelot, the centre of the faith which was

¹ ἀμπειρα, κατακελευσμός, σάλπιγξ, δάκτυλοι, ὀδοντισμός, σύριγγες. See August Mommsen's *Delphika* on this topic.

² Bötticher, *Baumcultus*, p. 353; and see reff. ap. Herm. *Griech. Ant.* ii. 127. Cf. Eur. *Ion*, 114 sqq.

³ Cic. *Tusc.* i. 47; cf. Plut. *De Consol. ad Apollon.* 14.

civilising Britain, "with many a mystic symbol" of the victory of man, so over the portico of the Delphian god were painted or sculptured such scenes as told of the triumph of an ideal humanity over the monstrous deities which are the offspring of savage fear.¹

There was "the light from the eyes of the twin faces" of Leto's children; there was Herakles with golden sickle, Iolaus with burning brand, withering the heads of the dying Hydra,—“the story,” says the girl in the *Ion* who looks thereon, “which is sung beside my loom;” there was the rider of the winged steed slaying the fire-breathing Chimaera; there was the tumult of the giants' war; Pallas lifting the aegis against Enceladus; Zeus crushing Mimas with the great bolt fringed with flame, and Bacchus “with his unwarlike ivy-wand laying another of Earth's children low.”

It is important thus to dwell on some of the indications,—and there are many of them,—which point to the conviction entertained in Greece as to the ethical and civilising influence of Delphi, inasmuch as the responses which have actually been preserved to us, though sufficient, when attentively considered, to support this view, are hardly such as would at once have suggested it. The set collections

¹ The passage in the *Ion*, 190-218, no doubt describes either the portico which the Athenians dedicated at Delphi about 426 B.C. (Paus. x. 11), or (as the words of the play, if taken strictly, would indicate) the façade of the temple itself.

of oracles, which no doubt contained those of most ethical importance, have perished; of all the "dark-written tablets, groaning with many an utterance of Loxias,"¹ none remain to us except such fragments of Porphyry's treatise as Eusebius has embodied in his refutation. And many of the oracles which we do possess owe their preservation to the most trivial causes,—to their connection with some striking anecdote, or to something quaint in their phraseology which has helped to make them proverbial. The reader, therefore, who passes from the majestic descriptions of the *Ion* or the *Eumenides* to the actual study of the existing oracles will at first run much risk of disappointment. Both style and subject will often seem unworthy of these lofty claims. He will come, for instance, on such oracles as that which orders Temenus to seek as guide of the army a man with three eyes, who turns out (according to different legends) to be either a one-eyed man on a two-eyed horse, or a two-eyed man on a one-eyed mule.² This oracle is composed precisely on the model of the primitive riddles of the Aztec and the Zulu, and is almost repeated in Scandinavian legend, where Odin's single eye gives point to the enigma.³ Again, the student's ear will often be offended by

¹ Eur. *Fr.* 625. Collections of oracles continued to be referred to till the Turks took Constantinople, *i.e.* for about 2000 years. See *reiff. ap. Wolff, de Noviss.* p. 48.

² Apollod. ii. 8; Paus. v. 3.

³ *Prim. Cult.* i. 85.

roughnesses of rhythm which seem unworthy of the divine inventor of the hexameter.¹ And the constantly-recurring prophecies are, for the most part, uninteresting and valueless, as the date of their composition cannot be proved, nor their genuineness in any way tested. As an illustration of the kind of difficulties which we here encounter, we may select one remarkable oracle,² of immense celebrity in antiquity, which certainly suggests more questions than we can readily answer. The outline of the familiar story is as follows:—Cræsus wished to make war on Cyrus, but was afraid to do so without express sanction from heaven. It was therefore all-important to him to test the veracity of the oracles, and his character, as the most religious man of his time, enabled him to do so systematically, without risk of incurring the charge of impiety. He sent messages to the six best-known oracles then existing,—to Delphi, to Dodona, to Branchidae, to the oracles of Zeus Ammon, of Trophonius, of Amphiaraus. On the hundredth day from leaving Sardis, his envoys were to ask what Cræsus was at that moment doing. Four oracles failed; Amphi-

¹ Bald though the god's style may often be, he possesses at any rate a sounder notion of metre than some of his German critics. Lobæck (*Aglaophamus*, p. 852), attempting to restore a lost response, suggests the line

στεννιγρὴν δ' ἐνοεῖν εὐρυγαστορὰ οὐ κατὰ γαῖαν.

He apologises for the quantity of the first syllable of *εὐρυγαστορὰ*, but seems to think that no further remark is needed.

² Herod. i. 47.

araus was nearly right; Apollo at Delphi entirely succeeded. For the Pythia answered, with exact truth, that Croesus was engaged in boiling a lamb and a tortoise together in a copper vessel with a copper lid. The messengers, who had not themselves known what Croesus was going to do, returned to Sardis and reported, and were then once more despatched to Delphi, with gifts so splendid that in the days of Herodotus they were still the glory of the sanctuary. They now asked the practically important question as to going to war, and received a quibbling answer which, in effect, lured on Croesus to his destruction.

Now here the two things certain are that Croesus did send these gifts to Delphi, and did go to war with Cyrus. Beyond these facts there is no sure footing. Short and pithy fragments of poetry, like the oracles on which the story hangs, are generally among the earliest and most enduring fragments of genuine history. On the other hand, they are just the utterances which later story-tellers are most eager to invent. Nor must we argue from their characteristic diction, for the pseudo-oracular is a style which has in all ages been cultivated with success. The fact which it is hardest to dispose of is the existence of the prodigious, the unrivalled offerings of Croesus at Delphi. Why were they sent there, unless for some such reason as Herodotus gives? Or are they sufficiently ex-

this, we have said all ; no case is so reported as to enable us altogether to exclude the possibility of coincidence, or of the fabrication of the prophecy after the event. But, on the other hand,—and this is a more surprising circumstance,—it is equally difficult to get together any satisfactory evidence for the conjecture which the parallel between Delphi and the Papacy so readily suggests,—that the power of the oracle was due to the machinations of a priestly aristocracy, with widely-scattered agents, who insinuated themselves into the confidence, and traded on the credulity, of mankind. We cannot but suppose that, to some extent at least, this must have been the case ; that when “the Pythia philip-pised” she reflected the fears of a knot of Delphian proprietors ; that the unerring counsel given to private persons, on which Plutarch insists, must have rested, in part at least, on a secret acquaintance with their affairs, possibly acquired in some cases under the seal of confession. In the paucity, however, of direct evidence to this effect, our estimate of the amount of pressure exercised by a deliberate human agency in determining the policy of Delphi must rest mainly on our antecedent view of what is likely to have been the case, where the interests involved were of such wide importance.¹

¹ For this view of the subject, see Hüllmann, *Würdigung des Delphischen Orakels* ; Götte, *Das Delphische Orakel*. August Mommsen (*Delphika*) takes a somewhat similar view, and calls the Pythia a “blosse Figurantin,” but his erudition has added little

For indeed the political influence of the Delphian oracle, however inspired or guided,—the value to Hellas of this one unquestioned centre of national counsel and national unity,—has always formed one of the most impressive topics with which the historian of Greece has had to deal. And I shall pass this part of my subject rapidly by, as already familiar to most readers, and shall not repeat at length the well-known stories,—the god's persistent command to expel the Peisistratids from Athens, his partiality for Sparta, as shown both in encouragement and warning,¹ or the attempts, successful² and unsuccessful,³ to bribe his priestess. Nor shall I do more than allude to the encouragement of colonisation, counsel of great wisdom, which the god lost no opportunity of enforcing on both the Dorian and the Ionian stocks. He sent the Cretans to Sicily,⁴ and Alcmaeon to the Echinades;⁵ he ordered the foundation of Byzantium⁶ “over against the city of the blind;” he sent Archias to Ortygia to the scanty store of texts on which Hüllmann, etc., depend. I may mention here that Hendess has collected most of the existing oracles (except those quoted by Eusebius) in a tract, *Oracula quae supersunt*, etc., which is convenient for reference.

¹ Herod. vi. 52; Thuc. i. 118, 123; ii. 54. Warnings, ap. Paus. iii. 8; ix. 32; Diod. Sic. xi. 50; xv. 54. Plut. *Lys.* 22; *Agésil.* 3.

² Cleisthenes, Herod. v. 63, 66; Pleistoanax, Thuc. v. 16.

³ Lysander; Plut. *Lys.* 26; Ephor. *Fr.* 127; Nep. *Lys.* 3. See also Herod. vi. 66.

⁴ Herod. vii. 170.

⁵ Thuc. ii. 102.

⁶ Strab. vii. 320; Tac. *Ann.* xii. 63; but see Herod. iv. 144.

found Syracuse,¹ the Bœotians to Heraclea at Pratos,² and the Spartans to Heraclea in Thessaly. And in the story which Herodotus³ and Pindar⁴ alike have made renowned, he singled out Battus,—anxious merely to learn a cure for his stammer, but type of the man with a destiny higher than he knows,—to found at Cyrene “a charioteering city upon the silvern bosom of the hill.” And, as has often been remarked, this function of colonisation had a religious as well as a political import. The colonists, before whose adventurous armaments Apollo, graven on many a gem, still hovers over the sea, carried with them the civilising maxims of the “just-judging”⁵ sanctuary as well as the brand kindled on the world’s central altar-stone from that pine-fed⁶ and eternal fire. Yet more distinctly can we trace the response of the god to each successive stage of ethical progress to which the evolution of Greek thought attains.

The moralising Hesiod is honoured at Delphi in preference to Homer himself. The Seven Wise Men, the next examples of a deliberate effort after ethical rules, are connected closely with the Pythian shrine. Above the portal is inscribed that first condition of all moral progress, “Know Thyself”;

¹ Paus. v. 7.

² Justin. xvi. 3.

³ Herod. iv. 155.

⁴ *Pyth.* iv.

⁵ *Pyth.* xi. 9.

⁶ Plut. *de EI apud Delphos* Cf. Aesch. *Eum.* 40; *Choeph.* 1036.

nor does the god refuse to encourage the sages whose inferior ethical elevation suggests to them only such maxims as, "Most men are bad," or "Never go bail."¹

Solon and Lycurgus, the spiritual ancestors of the Athenian and the Spartan types of virtue, receive the emphatic approval of Delphi, and the "Theban eagle," the first great exponent of the developed faith of Greece, already siding with the spirit against the letter, and refusing to ascribe to a divinity any immoral act, already preaching the rewards and punishments of a future state in strains of impassioned revelation,—this great poet is dear above all men to Apollo during his life, and is honoured for centuries after his death by the priest's nightly summons, "Let Pindar the poet come in to the supper of the god."² It is from Delphi that reverence for oaths, respect for the life of slaves, of women, of suppliants, derive in great measure their sanction and strength.³ I need only allude to the well-known story of Glaucus, who consulted the god to know whether he should deny having received the gold in deposit from his friend, and who was warned in lines which sounded from end to end of Greece of the nameless Avenger of the broken

¹ I say nothing *de EI apud Delphos*, about the mystic word which five of the wise men, or perhaps all seven together, put up in wooden letters at Delphi, for their wisdom has in this instance wholly transcended our interpretation.

² Paus. ix. 23.

³ Herod. ii. 134 ; vi. 139, etc.

oath,—whose wish was punished like a deed, and whose family was blotted out. The numerous responses of which this is the type brought home to men's minds the notion of right and wrong, of reward and punishment, with a force and impressiveness which was still new to the Grecian world.

More surprising, perhaps, at so early a stage of moral thought, is the catholicity of the Delphian god, his indulgence towards ceremonial differences or ceremonial offences, his reference of casuistical problems to the test of the inward rightness of the heart.¹ It was the Pythian Apollo who replied to the inquiry, "How best are we to worship the gods?" by the philosophic answer, "After the custom of your country,"² and who, if those customs varied, would only bid men choose "the best." It was Apollo who rebuked the pompous sacrifice of the rich Magnesians by declaring his preference for the cake and frankincense which the pious Achæans offered in humbleness of heart.³ It was Apollo who

¹ See, for instance, the story of the young man and the brigands, *Ael. Hist. Var.* iii. 4. 3.

² *Xen. Mem.* iv. 3. ἡ τε γὰρ Πυθία νόμῳ πόλεως ἀναιρεῖ ποιούντας εὖσεβῶς ἂν ποιεῖν. The Pythia often urged the maintenance or renewal of ancestral rites. *Paus.* viii. 24, etc.

³ *Theopomp. Fr.* 283; cf. *Sopater, Prolegg. in Aristid. Panath.* p. 740, εὐαδέ μοι χθιζὸς λίβανος, κ.τ.λ. (*Wolff, de Noviss.* p. 5; *Lob, Agl.* 1006), and compare the story of Poseidon (*Plut. de Prof. in Virt.* 12), who first reproached Stilpon in a dream for the cheapness of his offerings, but on learning that he could afford nothing

warned the Greeks not to make superstition an excuse for cruelty ; who testified, by his commanding interference, his compassion for human infirmities, for the irresistible heaviness of sleep,¹ for the thoughtlessness of childhood,² for the bewilderment of the whirling brain.³

Yet the impression which the Delphian oracles make on the modern reader will depend less on isolated anecdotes like these than on something of the style and temper which appears especially in those responses which Herodotus has preserved,—something of that delightful mingling of *naïveté* with greatness, which was the world's irrecoverable bloom. What scholar has not smiled over the god's answer⁴ to the colonists who had gone to a barren island in mistake for Libya, and came back complaining that Libya was unfit to live in? He told them that "if they who had never visited the

better, smiled, and promised to send abundant anchovies. For the Delphian god's respect for honest poverty, see Plin. *H. N.* vii. 47.

¹ Evenius. Herod. ix. 93.

² Paus. viii. 23. This is the case of the Arcadian children who hung the goddess in play.

³ Paus. vi. 9 ; Plut. *Romul.* 28 (Cleomedes). For further instances of the inculcation of mercy, see Thuc. ii. 102 ; Athen. xi. p. 504.

⁴ Herod. iv. 157. There seems some analogy between this story and the Norse legend of second-sight, which narrates how "Mgimund shut up three Finns in a hut for three nights that they might visit Iceland and inform him of the lie of the country where he was to settle. Their bodies became rigid, they sent their souls on the errand, and awakening after three days, they gave a description of the Vatnsdael."—*Prim. Cult.* i. 396.

sheep-bearing Libya knew it better than he who *had*, he greatly admired their cleverness." Who has not felt the majesty of the lines which usher in the test-oracle of Croesus with the lofty assertion of the omniscience of heaven?¹ lines which deeply impressed the Greek mind, and whose graven record, two thousand years afterwards, was among the last relics which were found among the ruins of Delphi.²

It is Herodotus, if any one, who has caught for us the expression on the living face of Hellas. It is Herodotus whose pencil has perpetuated that flying moment of young unconsciousness when evil itself seemed as if it could leave no stain on her expanding soul, when all her faults were reparable, and all her wounds benign; when we can still feel that in her upward progress all these and more might be forgiven and pass harmless away—

"For the time

Was May-time, and as yet no sin was dreamed."

And through all this vivid and golden scene the Pythian Apollo—"the god," as he is termed with a sort of familiar affection—is the never-failing counsellor and friend. His providence is all the divinity which the growing nation needs. His wisdom is

¹ Herod. i. 47.

² Cyriac of Ancona, in the sixteenth century, found a slab of marble with the couplet *οἶδα τ' ἐγώ*, etc., inscribed on it. See Foucart, p. 139.

not inscrutable and absolute, but it is near and kind; it is like the counsel of a young father to his eager boy. To strip the oracles from Herodotus' history would be to deprive it of its deepest unity and its most characteristic charm.

And in that culminating struggle with the barbarians, when the young nation rose, as it were, to knightly manhood through one great ordeal, how moving — through all its perplexities — was the attitude of the god! We may wish, indeed, that he had taken a firmer tone, that he had not trembled before the oncoming host, nor needed men's utmost supplications before he would give a word of hope. But this is a later view; it is the view of Oenomaus and Eusebius, rather than of Aeschylus or Herodotus.¹ To the contemporary Greeks it seemed no shame nor wonder that the national protector, benignant but not omnipotent, should tremble with the fortunes of the nation, that all his strength should scarcely suffice for a conflict in which every fibre of the forces of Hellas was strained, "as though men fought upon the earth and gods in upper air."

And seldom indeed has history shown a scene so strangely dramatic, never has poetry entered so deeply into human fates, as in that council at Athens² when the question of absolute surrender

¹ Herod. vii. 139, seems hardly meant to blame the god, though it praises the Athenians for hoping against hope.

² Herod. vii. 143.

or desperate resistance turned on the interpretation which was to be given to the dark utterance of the god. It was an epithet which saved civilisation ; it was the one word which blessed the famous islet instead of cursing it altogether, which gave courage for that most fateful battle which the world has known—

“Thou, holy Salamis, sons of men shalt slay,
Or on earth’s scattering or ingathering day.”

After the great crisis of the Persian war Apollo is at rest.¹ In the tragedians we find him risen high above the attitude of a struggling tribal god. Worshippers surround him, as in the *Ion*, in the spirit of glad self-dedication and holy service ; his priestess speaks as in the opening of the *Eumenides*, where the settled majesty of godhead breathes through the awful calm. And now, more magnificent though more transitory than the poet’s song, a famous symbolical picture embodies for the remaining generations of Greeks the culminant conception of the religion of Apollo’s shrine.

“Not all the treasures,” as Homer has it, “which the stone threshold of the Far-darter holds safe within” would now be so precious to us as the power of looking for one hour on the greatest work of the greatest painter of antiquity, the picture by

¹ It is noticeable that the god three times defended his own shrine,—against Xerxes (Herod. viii. 36), Jason of Pherae (Xen. *Hell.* vi. 4), Brennus (Paus. x. 23).

Polygnotus in the Hall of the Cnidians at Delphi, of the descent of Odysseus among the dead.¹ For as it was with the oracle of Teiresias that the roll of responses began, so it is the picture of that same scene which shows us, even through the meagre description of Pausanias, how great a space had been traversed between the horizon and the zenith of the Hellenic faith. "The ethical painter," as Aristotle calls him,² the man on whose works it ennobled a city to gaze, the painter whose figures were superior to nature as the characters of Homer were greater than the greatness of men, had spent on this altar-piece, if I may so term it, of the Hellenic race his truest devotion and his utmost skill. The world to which he introduces us is Homer's shadow-world, but it reminds us also of a very different scene. It recalls the visions of that Sacred Field on whose walls an unknown painter has set down with so startling a reality the faith of mediæval Christendom as to death and the hereafter.

In place of Death with her vampire aspect and wiry wings, we have the fiend Eurynomus, "painted of the blue-black colour of flesh-flies," and battening

¹ For this picture see Paus. x. 28-31; also Welcker (*Kleine Schriften*), and W. W. Lloyd in the *Classical Museum*, who both give Riepenhausen's restoration. While differing from much in Welcker's view of the picture, I have followed him in supposing that a vase figured in his *Alte Denkmäler*, vol. iii. plate 29, represents at any rate the figure and expression of Polygnotus' *Odysseus*. The rest of my description can, I think, be justified from Pausanias.

² *Ar. Pol.* viii. 8; *Poet.* ii. 2.

on the corpses of the slain. In place of the kings and ladies, who tell us in the rude Pisan epigraph how

“ Ischermo di sapere e di ricchezza
Di nobiltate ancora e di prodezza
Vale niente ai colpi de costei,”—

it is Theseus and Sisyphus and Eriphyle who teach us that might and wealth and wisdom “against those blows are of no avail.” And Tityus, whose scarce imaginable outrage in the Pythian valley upon the mother of Apollo herself carries back his crime and his penalty into an immeasurable past,—Tityus lay huge and prone upon the pictured field, but the image of him (and whether this were by chance or art Pausanius could not say) seemed melting into cloud and nothingness through the infinity of his woe. But there also were heroes and heroines of a loftier fate,—Memnon and Sarpedon, Tyro and Penthesilea, in attitudes that told that “calm pleasures there abide, majestic pains ;”—Achilles, with Patroclus at his right hand, and near Achilles Protesilaus, fit mate in valour and in constancy for that type of generous friendship and passionate woe. And there was Odysseus, still a breathing man, but with no trace of terror in his earnest and solemn gaze, demanding from Teiresias, as Dante from Virgil, all that that strange world could show ; while near him a woman’s figure stood, his mother Anticleia, waiting to call to him in those words which in Homer’s

song seem to strike at once to the very innermost of all love and all regret. And where the mediæval painter had set hermits praying as the type of souls made safe through their piety and their knowledge of the divine, the Greek had told the same parable after another fashion. For in Polygnotus' picture it was Tellis and Cleoboia, a young man and a maid, who were crossing Acheron together with hearts at peace; and amid all those legendary heroes these figures alone were real and true, and of a youth and a maiden who not long since had passed away; and they were at peace because they had themselves been initiated, and Cleoboia had taught the mysteries of Demeter to her people and her father's house. And was there, we may ask, in that great company, any heathen form which we may liken, however distantly, to the Figure who, throned among the clouds on the glowing Pisan wall, marshals the blessed to their home in light? Almost in the centre, as it would seem, of Polygnotus' picture was introduced a mysterious personality who found no place in Homer's poem,—a name round which had grown a web of hopes and emotions which no hand can disentangle now, — "The minstrel sire of song, Orpheus the well-beloved, was there."

It may be that the myth of Orpheus was at first nothing more than another version of the world-old story of the Sun; that his descent and resurrection were but the symbols of the night and the day;

that Eurydice was but an emblem of the lovely rose-clouds which sink back from his touch into the darkness of evening only to enfold him more brightly in the dawn. But be this as it may, the name of Orpheus¹ had become the centre of the most aspiring and the deepest thoughts of Greece; the lyre which he held, the willow-tree on which in the picture his hand was laid, were symbols of mystic meaning, and he himself was the type of the man "who has descended and ascended"—who walks the earth with a heart that turns continually towards his treasure in a world unseen.

When this great picture was painted, the sanctuary and the religion of Delphi might well seem indestructible and eternal. But the name of Orpheus, introduced here perhaps for the first time into the centre of the Apolline faith, brings with it a hint of that spirit of mysticism which has acted as a solvent,—sometimes more powerful even than criticism, as the sun in the fable of Aesop was more powerful than the wind,—upon the dogmas of every religion in turn. And it suggests a forward glance to an oracle given at Delphi on a later day,² and cited by Porphyry to illustrate the necessary evanescence and imperfection of whatsoever image

¹ See, for instance, Maury, *Religions de la Grèce*, chap. xviii. Aelius Lampridius (*Alex. Sev. Vita*, 29) says—"In Larario et Apollonium et Christum, Abraham et Orpheum, et hujusmodi deos habebat."

² Eus. *Pr. Ev.* vi. 3.

of spiritual things can be made visible on earth. A time shall come when even Delphi's mission shall have been fulfilled; and the god himself has predicted without despair the destruction of his holiest shrine—

“Ay, if ye bear it, if ye endure to know
That Delphi's self with all things gone must go,
Hear with strong heart the unfaltering song divine
Peal from the laurelled porch and shadowy shrine.
High in Jove's home the battling winds are torn,
From battling winds the bolts of Jove are born;
These as he will on trees and towers he flings,
And quells the heart of lions or of kings;
A thousand crags those flying flames confound,
A thousand navies in the deep are drowned,
And ocean's roaring billows, cloven apart,
Bear the bright death to Amphitrite's heart.
And thus, even thus, on some long-destined day,
Shall Delphi's beauty shrivel and burn away,—
Shall Delphi's fame and fane from earth expire
At that bright bidding of celestial fire.”

The ruin has been accomplished. All is gone, save such cyclopean walls as date from days before Apollo, such ineffaceable memories as Nature herself has kept of the vanished shrine.¹ Only the Corycian cave still shows, with its gleaming stalagmites, as though the nymphs to whom it was hallowed were sleeping there yet in stone; the Phaedriades

¹ See Mr. Aubrey de Vere's *Picturesque Sketches in Greece and Turkey* for a striking description of Delphian scenery. Other details will be found in Foucart, pp. 113, 114; and cf. Paus. x. 33.

or Shining Crags still flash the sunlight from their streams that scatter into air; and dwellers at Castri still swear that they have heard the rushing Thyiades keep their rout upon Parnassus' brow.

III.

Even while Polygnotus was painting the Lesche of the Cnidians at Delphi a man was talking in the Athenian market-place, from whose powerful individuality, the most impressive which Greece had ever known, were destined to flow streams of influence which should transform every department of belief and thought. In tracing the history of oracles we shall feel the influence of Socrates mainly in two directions; in his assertion of a personal and spiritual relation between man and the unseen world, an oracle not without us but within; and in his origination of the idea of science, of a habit of mind which should refuse to accept any explanation of phenomena which failed to confer the power of predicting those phenomena or producing them anew. We shall find that, instead of the old acceptance of the responses as heaven-sent mysteries, and the old demands for prophetic knowledge or for guidance in the affairs of life, men are more and more concerned with the questions: How can oracles be practically produced? and what relation between God and man do they imply? But first of all, the oracle which

concerned Socrates himself, which declared him to be the wisest of mankind, is certainly one of the most noticeable ever uttered at Delphi. The fact that the man on whom the god had bestowed this extreme laudation, a laudation paralleled only by the mythical words addressed to Lycurgus, should a few years afterwards have been put to death for impiety, is surely one of a deeper significance than has been often observed. It forms an overt and impressive instance of that divergence between the law and the prophets, between the letter and the spirit, which is sure to occur in the history of all religions, and on the manner of whose settlement the destiny of each religion in turn depends. In this case the conditions of the conflict are striking and unusual.¹ Socrates is accused of failing to honour the gods of the State, and of introducing new gods under the name of demons, or spirits, as we must translate the word, since the title of demon has acquired in the mouths of the Fathers a bad signification. He replies that he *does* honour the gods of the State, as he understands them, and that the spirit who speaks with him is an agency which he cannot disavow.

The first count of the indictment brings into prominence an obvious defect in the Greek religion,

¹ On the trial of Socrates and kindred points see, besides Plato (*Apol.*, *Phaed.*, *Euthyphr.*) and Xenophon (*Mem.*, *Apol.*), Diog. Laert. ii. 40, Diod. Sic. xiv. 37, Plut. *De genio Socratis*.

the absence of any inspired text to which the orthodox could refer. Homer and Hesiod, men like ourselves, were the acknowledged authors of the theology of Greece; and when Homer and Hesiod were respectfully received, but interpreted with rationalising freedom, it was hard to know by what canons to judge the interpreter. The second count opens questions which go deeper still. It was indeed true, though how far Anytus and Meletus perceived it we cannot now know, that the demon of Socrates indicated a recurrence to a wholly different conception of the unseen world, a conception before which Zeus and Apollo, heaven-god and sun-god, were one day to disappear. But who, except Apollo himself, was to pronounce on such a question? It was he who was for the Hellenic race the source of continuous revelation; his utterances were a sanction or a condemnation from which there was no appeal. And in this debate his verdict for the defendant had been already given. We have heard of Christian theologians who are "more orthodox than the Evangelists." In this case the Athenian jurymen showed themselves more jealous for the gods' honour than were the gods themselves.

To us, indeed, Socrates stands as the example of the truest religious conservatism, of the temper of mind which is able to cast its own original convictions in an ancestral mould, and to find the last outcome of speculation in the humility of a trustful

faith. No man, as is well known, ever professed a more childlike confidence in the Delphian god than he, and many a reader through many a century has been moved to a smile which was not far from tears at his account of his own mixture of conscientious belief and blank bewilderment when the infallible deity pronounced that Socrates was the wisest of mankind.

A spirit balanced like that of Socrates could hardly recur; and the impulse given to philosophical inquiry was certain to lead to many questionings as to the true authority of the Delphic precepts. But before we enter upon such controversies, let us trace through some further phases the influence of the oracles on public and private life.

For it does not appear that Delphi ceased to give utterances on the public affairs of Greece so long as Greece had public affairs worthy the notice of a god. Oracles occur, with a less natural look than when we met them in Herodotus, inserted as a kind of unearthly evidence in the speeches of Aeschines and Demosthenes.¹ Hyperides confidently recommends his audience to check the account which a messenger had brought of an oracle of Amphiaras by despatching another messenger with the same question to Delphi.² Oracles, as we are informed, foretold the

¹ e.g. Dem. *Meid.* 53 :—τῷ δῆμῳ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὁ τοῦ Διὸς σημαίνει, etc.

² Hyper. *Euxen.* p. 8.

battle of Leuctra,¹ the battle of Chaeronea,² the destruction of Thebes by Alexander.³ Alexander himself consulted Zeus Ammon not only on his own parentage but as to the sources of the Nile, and an ingenuous author regrets that, instead of seeking information on this purely geographical problem, which divided with Homer's birthplace the curiosity of antiquity, Alexander did not employ his prestige and his opportunities to get the question of the origin of evil set at rest for ever.⁴ We hear of oracles given to Epaminondas,⁵ to the orator Callistratus,⁶ and to Philip of Macedon.⁷ To Cicero the god gave advice which that sensitive statesman would have done well to follow,—to take his own character and not the opinion of the multitude as his guide in life.⁸

Nero, too, consulted the Delphian oracle, which pleased him by telling him to "beware of seventy-three,"⁹ for he supposed that he was to reign till he reached that year. The god, however, alluded to the age of his successor Galba. Afterwards Nero,—grown to an overweening presumption which could brook no rival worship, and become, as we may say, Antapollo as well as Antichrist,—murdered certain men and cast them into the cleft of Delphi, thus

¹ Paus. ix. 14.² Plut. *Dem.* 19.³ Diod. xvii. 10.⁴ Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 25.⁵ Paus. viii. 11.⁶ Lycurg. *Leoer.* 160.⁷ Diod. xvi. 91.⁸ Plut. *Cic.* 5.⁹ Suet. *Nero*, 38.

extinguishing for a time the oracular power.¹ Plutarch, who was a contemporary of Nero's, describes in several essays this lowest point of oracular fortunes. Not Delphi alone, but the great majority of Greek oracles, were at that time hushed, a silence which Plutarch ascribes partly to the tranquillity and depopulation of Greece, partly to a casual deficiency of Demons,—the immanent spirits who give inspiration to the shrines, but who are themselves liable to change of circumstances, or even to death.²

Whatever may have been the cause of this oracular eclipse, it was of no long duration. The oracle of Delphi seems to have been restored in the reign of Trajan; and in Hadrian's days a characteristic story shows that it had again become a centre of distant inquirers. The main preoccupation of that imperial scholar was the determination of Homer's birthplace, and he put the question in person to the Pythian priestess. The question had naturally been asked before, and an old reply, purporting to have been given to Homer himself, had already been engraved on Homer's statue in the sacred precinct.

¹ Dio Cass. lxxiii. 14. Suetonius and Dio Cassius do not know why Nero destroyed Delphi; but some such view as that given in the text seems the only conceivable one.

² Plut. *de Defect. orac.* 11. We may compare the way in which Heliogabalus put an end to the oracle of the celestial goddess of the Carthaginians, by insisting on marrying her statue, on the ground that she was the Moon and he was the Sun.—Herodian, v. 6.

But on the inquiry of the sumptuous emperor the priestess changed her tone, described Homer as "an immortal siren," and very handsomely made him out to be the grandson both of Nestor and of Odysseus.¹ It was Hadrian, too, who dropped a laurel-leaf at Antioch into Daphne's stream, and when he drew it out there was writ thereon a promise of his imperial power. He choked up the fountain, that no man might draw from its prophecy such a hope again.² But Hadrian's strangest achievement was to found an oracle himself. The worshippers of Antinous at Antinoë were taught to expect answers from the deified boy: "They imagine," says the scornful Origen, "that there breathes from Antinous a breath divine."³

For some time after Hadrian we hear little of Delphi. But, on the other hand, stories of oracles of varied character come to us from all parts of the Roman world. The bull Apis, "trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud," refused food from the hand of Germanicus, and thus predicted his approaching death.⁴ Germanicus, too, drew the same dark presage from the oracle at Colophon of the Clarian Apollo.⁵ And few oracular answers have

¹ Anth. Pal. xiv. 102 :—ἀγνωστον μ' ἐρέεις γενεῆς καὶ πατρὶδος αἰῆς ἀμβροσίου Σειρήνος, etc.

² Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* v. 19.

³ Orig. *ad. Cels.* ap. Wolff, *de Noviss.* p. 43, where see other citations.

⁴ Plin. viii. 46.

⁵ Tac. *Ann.* ii. 54.

been more impressively recounted than that which was given to Vespasian by the god Carmel, upon Carmel, while the Roman's dreams of empire were still hidden in his heart. "Whatsoever it be, Vespasian, that thou preparest now, whether to build a house or to enlarge thy fields, or to get thee servants for thy need, there is given unto thee a mighty home, and far-reaching borders, and a multitude of men."¹

The same strange mingling of classic and Hebrew memories, which the name of Carmel in this connection suggests, meets us when we find the god Bel at Apamea,—that same Baal "by whom the prophets prophesied and walked after things that do not profit" in Jeremiah's day,—answering a Roman emperor in words drawn from Homer's song. For it was thus that the struggling Macrinus received the signal of his last and irretrievable defeat:²—

"Ah, king outworn ! young warriors press thee sore,
And age is on thee, and thou thyself no more."

In the private oracles, too, of these post-classical times there is sometimes a touch of romance which reminds us how much human emotion there has

¹ Tac. *Hist.* ii. 78. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5, speaks of Carmel's *oracle*, though it seems that the answer was given after a simple *extispicium*.

² Dio Cass. lxxviii. 40 ; Hom. *Il.* viii. 103. Capitolinus, in his life of Macrinus (c. 3), shows incidentally that under the Antonines it was customary for the Roman proconsul of Africa to consult the oracle of the Dea Caelestis Carthaginiensium.

been in generations which we pass rapidly by; how earnest and great a thing many a man's mission has seemed to him, which to us is merged in the dulness and littleness of a declining age. There is something of this pathos in the Pythia's message to the wandering preacher,¹ "Do as thou now doest, until thou reach the end of the world," and in the dream which came to the weary statesman in Apollo Grannus' shrine,² and bade him write at the end of his life's long labour Homer's words—

"But Hector Zeus took forth and bare him far
From dust, and dying, and the storm of war."

And in the records of these last centuries of paganism we notice that the established oracles, the orthodox forms of inquiry, are no longer enough to satisfy the eagerness of men. In that upheaval of the human spirit which bore to the surface so much of falsehood and so much of truth,—the religion of Mithra, the religion of Serapis, the religion of Christ,—questions are asked from whatever source, glimpses are sought through whatsoever in nature has been deemed transparent to the influences of an encompassing Power. It was in this age³ that at

¹ Dio Chrysostom, *περὶ φύγης*, p. 255. This message had, perhaps, a political meaning.

² Dio Cassius, *ad fin.*; Hom. *Il.* xi. 163.

³ The following examples of later oracles are not precisely synchronous. They illustrate the character of a long period, and the date at which we happen to hear of each has depended largely on accident.

Hierapolis the "clear round stone of the onyx kind," which Damascius describes, showed in its mirroring depths letters which changed and came, or sometimes emitted that "thin and thrilling sound,"¹ which was interpreted into the message of a slowly-uttering Power. It was in this age that Chosroes drew his divinations from the flickering of an eternal fire.² It was in this age that the luminous meteor would fall from the temple of Uranian Venus upon Lebanon into her sacred lake beneath, and declare her presence and promise her consenting grace.³ It was in this age that sealed letters containing numbered questions were sent to the temple of the sun at Hierapolis, and answers were returned in order, while the seals remained still intact.⁴ It was in this age that the famous oracle which predicted the death of Valens was obtained by certain men who sat round a table and noted letters of the alphabet

¹ Damasc. ap. Phot. 348, *φωνὴν λεπτοῦ σφρίσματος*. See also Paus. vii. 21, and compare Spartian, *Did. Jul.* 7, where a child sees the images in a mirror applied to the top of his head rendered abnormally sensitive by an unexplained process.

² Procop. *Bell. Pers.* ii. 24. The practice of divining from sacrificial flame or smoke was of course an old one, though rarely connected with any regular seat of oracle. Cf. Herod. viii. 134. The *πυρεῖον* in the *χωρίον Ἀδιαβιγάνων*, which Chosroes consulted, was a fire worshipped in itself, and sought for oracular purposes.

³ Zosimus, *Ann.* i. 57.

⁴ Macrobi. *Sat.* i. 23. Fontenelle's criticism (*Histoire des Oracles*) on the answer given to Trajan is worth reading along with the passage of Macrobius as an example of Voltairian mockery, equally incisive and unjust. Cf. Amm. Marcell. xiv. 7 for a variety of this form of response

which were spelt out for them by some automatic agency, after a fashion which, from the description of Ammianus we cannot precisely determine.¹ This oracle, construed into a menace against a Christian Emperor, gave rise to a persecution of paganism of so severe a character that, inasmuch as philosophers were believed especially to affect the forbidden practice, the very repute or aspect of a philosopher, as Sozomen tells us,² was enough to bring a man under the notice of the police. This theological rancour will the less surprise us, if we believe with some modern criticism that St. Paul himself, under the pseudonym of Simon Magus, had not escaped the charge, at the hands of a polemical Father, of causing the furniture of his house to move without contact, in obedience to his unholy will.³

Finally, to conclude this strange list with an example which may by many minds be considered as typical of the rest, it was in this age that, at the Nymphæum at Apollonia in Epirus, an Ignis Fatuus⁴ gave by its waving approach and recession the re-

¹ Amm. Marcell. xxix. 2, and xxxi. 1.

² Sozomen. vi. 35.

³ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homil.* ii. 32. 638, τὰ ἐν οἰκίᾳ σκεύη ὡς αὐτόματα φερόμενα πρὸς ὑπηρέσιαν βλέπεσθαι ποιεῖ. Cf. Renan, *Les Apôtres*, p. 153, note, etc.

⁴ There can, I think, be little doubt that such was the true character of the flame which Dio Cassius (xli. 45) describes: πρὸς δὲ τὰς ἐπιχύσεις τῶν θυβρῶν ἐπαύξει καὶ ἐς ὕψος ἐξαιρεται, etc. Maury's explanation (ii. 446) is slightly different. The fluctuations of the flame on Etna (Paus. iii. 23) were an instance of a common volcanic phenomenon.

sponses which a credulous people sought,—except that this Will-o'-the-Wisp, with unexpected diffidence, refused to answer questions which had to do with marriage or with death.

Further examples are not needed to prove what the express statement of Tertullian and others testifies,¹ that the world was still “crowded with oracles” in the first centuries of our era. We must now retrace our steps and inquire with what eyes the post-Socratic philosophers² regarded a phenomenon so opposed to ordinary notions of enlightenment or progress.

Plato's theory of inspiration is too vast and far-reaching for discussion here. It must be enough to say that, although oracles seemed to him to constitute but a small part of the revelation offered by God to man, he yet maintained to the full their utility, and appeared to assume their truth. In his

¹ Tertullian, *de Anima*, 46 : Nam et oraculis hoc genus stipatus est orbis, etc. Cf. Plin. *Hist. Nat.* viii. 29 : Nec non et hodie multifariam ab oraculis medicina petitur. Pliny's oracular remedy for hydrophobia (viii. 42) is not now pharmacopœal.

² For a good account of pre-Socratic views on this topic, see Bouché-Leclercq, i. 29. But the fragments of the early sages tantalise even more than they instruct. A genuine page of Pythagoras would here be beyond price. But it is the singular fate of the original *Ipsè* of our *Ipsè Dixit* that while the fact of his having said anything is proverbially conclusive as to its truth we have no trustworthy means of knowing what he really did say. Later ages depict him as the representative of continuous inward inspiration,—as a spirit linked with the Past, the Future, the Unseen, by a vision which is presence and a commerce which is identity.

ideal polity the oracles of the Delphian god were to possess as high an authority, and to be as frequently consulted, as in conservative Lacedæmon, and the express decision of heaven was to be invoked in matters of practical¹ as well as of ceremonial² import.

Aristotle, who possessed, — and no man had a better right to it, — a religion all his own, and to which he never converted anybody, delivered himself on the subject of oracular dreams with all his sagacious ambiguity. “It is neither easy,” he said, “to despise such things, nor yet to believe them.”³

The schools of philosophy which were dominant in Greece after the death of Aristotle occupied themselves only in a secondary way with the question of oracles. The Stoics and Academics were disposed to uphold their validity on conservative principles, utilising them as the most moral part of the old creed, the point from which its junction with philosophy was most easily made. Cicero’s treatise on divination contains a summary of the conservative view, and it is to be remarked that Cratippus and other Peripatetics disavowed the grosser forms of divination, and believed only in dreams and in the utterances of inspired frenzy.⁴

¹ *Leges*, vi. 914.

² *Leges*, v. 428; *Epinomis*, 362.

³ *Ar. Div. per Som.* i. 1. He goes on to suggest that dreams, though not *θεβπεμπτα*, may be *δαιμόνια*. Elsewhere he hints that the soul may draw her knowledge of the future from her own true nature, which she resumes in sleep. See *reff. ap. Bouché-Leclercq*, i. 55.

⁴ See *Cic. de Div.* i. 3.

Epicureans and Cynics, on the other hand, felt no such need of maintaining connection with the ancient orthodoxy, and allowed free play to their wit in dealing with the oracular tradition, or even considered it as a duty to disembarass mankind of this among other superstitions. The sceptic Lucian is perhaps of too purely mocking a temper to allow us to ascribe to him much earnestness of purpose in the amusing burlesques¹ in which he depicts the difficulty which Apollo feels in composing his official hexameters, or his annoyance at being obliged to hurry to his post of inspiration whenever the priestess chooses "to chew the bay-leaf and drink of the sacred spring."²

The indignation of Oenomaus, a cynic of Hadrian's age, is of a more genuine character, and there

¹ *Jupiter Tragoedus*; *Bis Accusatus*, etc. I need not remind the reader that such scoffing treatment of oracles does not now appear for the first time. The parodies in Aristophanes hit off the pompous oracular obscurity as happily as Lucian's. A recent German writer, on the other hand (Hoffmann, *Orakelwesen*), maintains, by precept and example, that no style can be more appropriate to serious topics.

² *Bis Accusatus*, 2. I may remark that although narcotics are often used to produce abnormal utterance (Lane's *Egyptians*, ii. 33; Maury, ii. 479), this mastication of a laurel-leaf or bay-leaf cannot be considered as more than a symbolical survival of such a practice. See, however, *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. iv. p. 152, note, for a most remarkable effect of laurel-water on a hysterical subject. The drinking of water (Iambl. *Myst. Aeg.* 72; Anacreon xiii.), or even of blood (Paus. ii. 24), would be equally inoperative for occult purposes; and though Pliny says that the water in Apollo's cave at Colophon shortened the drinker's life (*Hist. Nat.* ii. 106), it is difficult to imagine what natural salt could produce hallucination.

is much sarcastic humour in his account of his own visit to the oracle of Apollo at Colophon; how the first response which he obtained might have been taken at random from a book of elegant extracts, and had also, to his great disgust, been delivered in the self-same words to a commercial traveller immediately before him; how, to his second question, "Who will teach me wisdom?" the god returned an answer of almost meaningless imbecility; and how, when he finally asked, "Where shall I go now?" the god told him "to draw a long bow and knock over untold green-feeding ganders."¹ "And who in the world," exclaims the indignant philosopher, "will inform me what these untold ganders may mean?"

Anecdotes like this may seem to warn us that our subject is drawing to a close. And to students of these declining schools of Greek philosophy, it may well appear that the Greek spirit had burnt itself out; that all creeds and all speculations were being enfeebled into an eclecticism or a scepticism, both of them equally shallow and unreal. But this was not to be. It was destined that every seed which the great age of Greece had planted should germinate and grow; and a school was now to arise which should take hold, as it were, of the universe by a forgotten clew, and should give fuller

¹ Eus. *Pr. Ev.* v. 23—

ἐκ τανυστρόφοιο λᾶας σφενδόνης ἰεὺς ἀνὴρ
 χῆνας ἐναρίζειν βολαῖσιν, ἀσπέτους, ποιηβόρους.

meaning and wider acceptance to some of the most remarkable, though hitherto least noticed, utterances of earlier men. We must go back as far as Hesiod to understand the Neoplatonists.

For it is in Hesiod's celebrated story of the Ages of the World¹ that we find the first Greek conception, obscure though its details be,—of a hierarchy of spiritual beings who fill the unseen world, and can discern and influence our own. The souls of heroes, he says, become happy spirits who dwell aloof from our sorrow; the souls of men of the golden age become good and guardian spirits, who flit over the earth and watch the just and unjust deeds of men; and the souls of men of the silver age become an inferior class of spirits, themselves mortal, yet deserving honour from mankind.² The same strain of thought appears in Thales, who defines demons as spiritual existences, heroes, as the souls of men separated from the body.³ Pythagoras held much the same view, and, as we shall see below, believed that in a certain sense these spirits were occasionally to be seen or felt.⁴ Heraclitus held "that all things were full of souls and spirits,"⁵ and

¹ Hes. *Opp.* 109, *sqq.*

² It is uncertain where Hesiod places the abode of this class of spirits; the MSS. read *ἐπιχθόνιοι*, Gaisford (with Tzetzes) and Wolff, *de Daemonibus*, *ὑποχθόνιοι*.

³ Athenag. *Legat. pro Christo*, 21; cf. Plut. *de Plac. Phil.* i. 8.

⁴ Porph. *vit. Pyth.* 384; reff. ap. Wolff. For obsession, see Pseudo-Zaleucus, ap. Stob. *Flor.* xlv. 20.

⁵ Diog. Laert. ix. 6.

Empedocles has described in lines of startling power¹ the wanderings through the universe of a lost and homeless soul. Lastly, Plato, in the *Epinomis*,² brings these theories into direct connection with our subject by asserting that some of these spirits can read the minds of living men, and are still liable to be grieved by our wrong-doing,³ while many of them appear to us in sleep by visions, and are made known by voices and oracles, in our health or sickness, and are about us at our dying hour. Some are even visible occasionally in waking reality, and then again disappear, and cause perplexity by their obscure self-manifestation.⁴

Opinions like these, existing in a corner of the vast structure of Platonic thought, passed, as it seems, for centuries with little notice. Almost as unnoticed was the gradual development of the creed known as Orphic, which seems to have begun with making itself master of the ancient mysteries, and

¹ Plut. *de Iside*, 26.

² I believe, with Grote, etc., that the *Epinomis* is Plato's; at any rate it was generally accepted as such in antiquity, which is enough for the present purpose.

³ *Epinomis*, 361. μετέχοντα δὲ φρονήσεως θαυμαστῆς, ἅτε γένους ὄντα εὐμαθοῦς τε καὶ μνήμονος, γιγνώσκειν μὲν ξύμπασαν τὴν ἡμετέραν αὐτὰ διάνοιαν λέγωμεν, καὶ τὸν τε καλὸν ἡμῶν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἅμα θαυμαστῶς ἀσπάζεσθαι καὶ τὸν σφόδρα κακὸν μισεῖν, ἅπε λύπης μετέχοντα ἤδη, κ.τ.λ.

⁴ καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι τότε μὲν ὁρώμενον ἄλλοτε δὲ ἀποκρυφθὲν ἀδηλον γιγνόμενον, θαῦμα κατ' ἀμυδρὰν ὄψιν παρεχόμενον. The precise meaning of ἀμυδρὰ ὄψις is not clear without further knowledge of the phenomena which Plato had in his mind. Comp. the ἀλαμπῇ καὶ ἀμυδρὰν ζῶην, ὥσπερ ἀναθυμίασιν, which is all that reincarnated demons can look for (Plut. *de Defect.* 10).

only slowly spread through the profane world its doctrine that this life is a purgation, that this body is a sepulchre,¹ and that the Divinity, who surrounds us like an ocean, is the hope and home of the soul. But a time came when, under the impulse of a great religious movement, these currents of belief, which had so long run underground, broke into sight again in an unlooked-for direction. These tenets, and many more, were dwelt upon and expanded with new conviction by that remarkable series of men who furnish to the history of Greek thought so singular a concluding chapter. And no part, perhaps, of the Neoplatonic system shows more clearly than their treatment of oracles how profound a change the Greek religion has undergone beneath all its apparent continuity. It so happens that the Neoplatonic philosopher who has written most on our present subject, was also a man whose spiritual history affords a striking, perhaps an unique, epitome of the several stages through which the faith of Greece had up to that time passed. A Syrian of noble descent,² powerful intelligence, and

¹ See, for instance, Plato, *Crat.* 264. δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφεία τοῦτο ὄνομα (σῶμα quasi σῆμα) ὥς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὣν δὴ ἕνεκα δίδωσι, κ.τ.λ.

² G. Wolff, *Porphy. de Phil.* etc., has collected a mass of authorities on Porphyry's life, and has ably discussed the sequence of his writings. But beyond this tract I have found hardly anything written on this part of my subject,—on which I have dwelt the more fully, inasmuch as it seems hitherto to have attracted so little attention from scholars.

upright character, Porphyry brought to the study of the Greek religion little that was distinctively Semitic, unless we so term the ardour of his religious impulses, and his profound conviction that the one thing needful for man lay in the truest knowledge attainable as to his relation to the divine. Educated by Longinus, the last representative of expiring classicism, the Syrian youth absorbed all, and probably more than all, his master's faith. Homer became to him what the Bible was to Luther; and he spent some years in producing the most perfect edition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which had yet appeared, in order that no fragment of the inspired text might fail to render its full meaning. But, as it seems, in the performance of this task his faith received the same shock which had been fatal to the early piety of Greece. The behaviour of the gods in Homer was too bad to be condoned. He discerned, what is probably the truth, that there must be some explanation of these enormities which is not visible on the surface, and that nothing short of some profound mistake could claim acceptance for such legends as those of Zeus and Krenos, of Kronos and Uranus, amid so much else that is majestic and pure.¹ Many philologists would answer

¹ The impossibility of extracting a spiritual religion from Homer is characteristically expressed by Proclus (*ad. Tim.* 20), who calls Homer ἀπάθειάν τε νοερὰν καὶ ζωὴν φιλόσοφον οὐχ οἷός τε παραδοῦναι.

now that the mistake, the disease of language, lay in the expression in terms of human appetite and passion of the impersonal sequences of the great phenomena of Nature; that the most monstrous tales of mythology mean nothing worse or more surprising than that day follows night, and night again succeeds to day. To Porphyry such explanations were of course impossible. In default of Sanskrit he betook himself to allegory. The truth which must be somewhere in Homer, but which plainly was not in the natural sense of the words, must therefore be discoverable in a non-natural sense. The cave of the nymphs, for instance, which Homer describes as in Ithaca, is not in Ithaca. Homer must, therefore, have meant by the cave something quite other than a cave; must have meant, in fact, to signify by its inside the temporary, by its outside the eternal world. But this stage in Porphyry's development was not of long duration. As his conscience had revolted from Homer taken literally, so his intelligence revolted from such a fashion of interpretation as this. But yet he was not prepared to abandon the Greek religion. That religion, he thought, must possess some authority, some sacred book, some standard of faith, capable of being brought into harmony with the philosophy which, equally with the religion itself, was the tradition and inheritance of the race. And such a rule of faith, if to be found anywhere, must

be found in the direct communications of the gods to men. Scattered and fragmentary though these were, it must be possible to extract from them a consistent system.¹ This is what he endeavoured to do in his work, *On the Philosophy to be drawn from Oracles*, a book of which large fragments remain to us imbedded in Eusebius' treatise *On the Preparation for the Gospel*.

Perhaps the best guarantee of the good faith in which Porphyry undertook this task lies in the fact that he afterwards recognised that he had been unsuccessful. He acknowledged, in terms on which his antagonist Eusebius has gladly seized, that the mystery as to the authors of the responses was too profound, the responses themselves were too unsatisfactory, to admit of the construction from them of a definite and lofty faith. Yet there is one point on which, though his inferences undergo much modification, his testimony remains practically the same.² This testimony, based, as he implies and his biographers assert, on personal experience,³ is mainly concerned with the phenomena of possession or inspiration by an unseen power. These phenomena,

¹ ὡς ἂν ἐκ μόνου βεβαίου τὰς ἐλπίδας τοῦ σωθῆναι ἀρνούμενος (Eus. *Pr. Ev.* iv. 6) is the strong expression which Porphyry gives to his sense of the importance of this inquiry.

² There is one sentence in the epistle to Anebo which would suggest a contrary view, but the later *De Abstinētia*, etc., seem to me to justify the statement in the text.

³ See, for instance, Eus. *Pr. Ev.* iv. 6: μάλιστα γὰρ φιλοσόφῳ οὗτος τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς δοκεῖ καὶ δαίμοσι καὶ οἷς φησι θεοῖς ὠμολογῆναι.

so deeply involved in the conception of oracles, and which we must now discuss, are familiar to the ethnologist in almost every region of the globe. The savage, readily investing any unusual or striking object in nature with a spirit of its own, is likely to suppose further that a spirit's temporary presence may be the cause of any unusual act or condition of a human being. Even so slight an abnormality as the act of sneezing has generally been held to indicate the operation or the invasion of a god. And when we come to graver departures from ordinary well-being—nightmare, consumption, epilepsy, or madness—the notion that a disease-spirit has entered the sufferer becomes more and more obvious. Ravings which possess no applicability to surrounding facts are naturally held to be the utterances of some remote intelligence. Such ravings, when they have once become an object of reverence, may be artificially reproduced by drugs or other stimuli, and we may thus arrive at the belief in inspiration by an easy road.¹

There are traces in Greece of something of this reverence for disease, but they are faint and few; and the Greek ideal of soundness in mind and body, the Greek reverence for beauty and strength, seem to have characterised the race from a very early

¹ On this subject see *Prim. Cult.* chap. xiv. ; Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, pp. 252-5, etc. The Homeric phrase *στυγερὸς δὲ οἱ ἔχραε δαίμων* (*Od.* v. 396) seems to be the Greek expression which comes nearest to the doctrine of disease-spirits.

period. It is possible indeed that the first tradition of

“Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
And Teiresias and Phineus, prophets old,”

may have represented a primitive idea that the “celestial light shone inward” when the orbs of vision were darkened. But the legends which have reached us scarcely connect Homer’s blindness with his song, and ascribe the three prophets’ loss of sight to their own vanity or imprudence. In nymph-possession, which, in spite of Pausanias’ statement, is perhaps an older phenomenon than Apolline possession, we find delirium honoured, but it is a delirium proceeding rather from the inhalation of noxious vapours than from actual disease.¹ And in the choice of the Pythian priestess—while we find that care is taken that no complication shall be introduced into the process of oracular inquiry by her youth or good looks,²—there is little evidence to show that any preference was given to epileptics.³ Still less can we trace any such reason

¹ See Maury, ii. 475. Nymph-oracles were especially common in Bœotia, where there were many caves and springs.—Paus. ix. 2, etc. The passage from Hippocrates, *De Morbo Sacro*, cited by Maury, ii. 470, is interesting from its precise parallelism with savage beliefs, but cannot be pressed as an authority for primitive tradition.

² Diod. Sic. xvi. 27.

³ Maury (ii. 514) cites Plut. *de Defect. orac.* 46, and *Schol. Ar. Plut.* 39, in defence of the view that a hysterical subject was chosen as Pythia. But Plutarch expressly says (*de Defect.* 50) that it was necessary that the Pythia should be free from perturbation when

of choice in other oracular sanctuaries. We find here, in fact, the same uncertainty which hangs over the principle of selection of the god's mouthpiece in other shahmanistic countries, where the medicine-man or *angekok* is sometimes described as haggard and nervous, sometimes as in no way distinguishable from his less gifted neighbours.

Nor, on the other hand, do we find in Greece much trace of that other kind of possession of which the Hebrew prophets are our great example, where a peculiar loftiness of mind and character seem to point the prophet out as a fitting exponent of the will of heaven, and a sudden impulse gives vent in words, almost unconscious, to thoughts which seem no less than divine. The majestic picture of Amphiarus in the Seven against Thebes, the tragic personality of Cassandra in the Agamemnon, are the nearest parallels which Greece offers to an Elijah or a Jeremiah.¹ These, however, are mythi-

called on to prophesy, and the Scholion on Aristophanes is equally indecent and unphysiological. Moreover, Plutarch speaks of the custom of pouring cold water over the priestess in order to ascertain by her healthy way of shuddering that she was sound in body and mind. This same test was applied to goats, etc., when about to be sacrificed. There is no doubt evidence (cf. Maury, ii. 461) that the faculty of divination was supposed to be hereditary in certain families (perhaps even in certain localities, Herod. i. 78), but I cannot find that members of such families were sought for as priests in oracular seats.

¹ The exclamation of Helen (*Od.* xv. 172)—

κλυτέ μεν, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ μαντεύσομαι, ὥς ἐνι θυμῷ
ἀθάνατοι βάλλουσι καὶ ὥς τελέεσθαι ὀΐω—

cal characters; and so little was the gift of prophecy associated with moral greatness in later days, that while Plato attributes it to the action of the divinity, Aristotle feels at liberty to refer it to bile.¹

It were much to be wished that some systematic discussion of the subject had reached us from classical times. But none seems to have been composed, at any rate none has come down to us, till Plutarch's inquiry as to the causes of the general cessation of oracles in his age.² Plutarch's temper is conservative and orthodox, but we find, nevertheless, that he has begun to doubt whether Apollo is in every case the inspiring spirit. On the contrary, he thinks that sometimes this is plainly not the case, as in one instance where the Pythia, forced to prophesy while under the possession of a dumb and evil spirit, went into convulsions and soon afterwards died. And he recurs to a doctrine, rendered orthodox, as we have already seen, by its appearance in Hesiod, but little dwelt on in classical times, a doctrine which peoples the invisible world with a hierarchy of spirits of differing character and power. These spirits, he believes, give oracles, whose cha-

is as it were a naïve introduction to the art of prophecy. Menelaus, when appealed to as to the meaning of the portent observed, is perplexed: the more confident Helen volunteers an explanation, and impassioned rhetoric melts into inspired prediction.

¹ Plat. *Ion*. 5.—Ar. *Probl.* xxx.—I cannot dwell here on Plat. *Phædr.* 153, and similar passages, which suggest a theory of inspiration which would carry us far beyond the present topic.

² Plut. *de Defect. orac.* ; *de Pyth.* ; *de EI apud Delphos.*

racter therefore varies with the character and condition of the inspiring spirit; and of this it is hard to judge except inferentially, since spirits are apt to assume the names of gods on whom they in some way depend, though they may by no means resemble them in character or power. Nay, spirits are not necessarily immortal, and the death of a resident spirit may have the effect of closing an oracular shrine. The death of Pan himself was announced by a flying voice to Thamus, a sailor, "about the isles Echinades;" he was told to tell it at Palodes, and when the ship reached Palodes there was a dead calm. He cried out that Pan was dead, and there was a wailing in all the air.¹

In Plutarch, too, we perceive a growing disposition to dwell on a class of manifestations of which we have heard little since Homer's time,—evocations of the visible spirits of the dead.² Certain places, it seems, were consecrated by immemorial belief to this solemn ceremony. At Cumae,³ at Phigalea,⁴ at Heraclea,⁵ on the river Acheron, by the lake Aver-

¹ This quasi-human character of Pan (Herod. ii. 146; Pind. *Fr.* 68; Hyg. *Fab.* 224), coupled with the indefinite majesty which his name suggested, seems to have been very impressive to the later Greeks. An oracle quoted by Porphyry (ap. Eus. *Pr. Ev.*) εὐχόμεαι Ἰσφοῖς γεγώς Πανὶ σύμφυτος θεῷ κ.τ.λ., is curiously parallel to some Christian hymns in its triumphant sense of human kinship with the divinity.

² *Quaest. Rom.*; *de Defect. Orac.*; *de Ser. Num. Vind.*

³ Diod. Sic. iv. 22; Ephor. ap. Strab. v. 244.

⁴ Paus. iii. 17.

⁵ Plut. *Cim.* 6.

nus,¹ men strove to recall for a moment the souls who had passed away, sometimes, as Periander sought Melissa,² in need of the accustomed wifely counsel; sometimes, as Pausanias sought Cleonice,³ goaded by passionate remorse; or sometimes with no care to question, with no need to confess or to be forgiven, but as, in one form of the legend, Orpheus sought Eurydice,⁴ travelling to the Thesprotian Aornus, in the hope that her spirit would rise and look on him once again, and waiting for one who came not, and dying in a vain appeal.

But on such stories as these Plutarch will not dogmatically judge; he remarks only, and the remark was more novel then than now, that we know as yet no limit to the communications of soul with soul.

This transitional position of Plutarch may prepare us for the still wider divergence from ancient orthodoxy which we find in Porphyry. Porphyry is indeed anxious to claim for oracular utterances as high an authority as possible; and he continues to ascribe many of them to Apollo himself. But he no longer restricts the phenomena of possession and inspiration within the traditional limits as regards either their time, their place, or their author. He maintains that these phenomena may be reproduced

¹ Liv. xxiv. 12, etc. The origin of this νεκρομαρτεῖον was probably Greek. See reff. ap. Manry, ii. 467.

² Diod. iv. 22; Herod. v. 92, gives a rather different story.

³ Plut. *Cim.* 6. Paus. iii. 17.

⁴ Paus. ix. 30.

according to certain rules at almost any place and time, and that the spirits who cause them are of very multifarious character. I shall give his view at some length, as it forms by far the most careful inquiry into the nature of Greek oracles which has come down to us from an age in which they existed still; and it happens also that while the grace of Plutarch's style has made his essays on the same subject familiar to all, the post-classical date and style of Porphyry and Eusebius have prevented their more serious treatises from attracting much attention from English scholars.

According to Porphyry, then, the oracular or communicating demon or spirit,—we must adopt spirit as the word of wider meaning,—manifests himself in several ways. Sometimes he speaks through the mouth of the entranced “recipient,”¹ sometimes he shows himself in an immaterial, or even in a material form, apparently according to his own rank in the invisible world.² The recipient

¹ *δοχεὺς*, from *δέχομαι*, is the word generally used for the human intermediary between the god or spirit and the inquirers. See Lob. *Agl.* p. 108, on the corresponding word *καταβολικός* for the spirit who is thus received for a time into a human being's organism. Cf. also Firmicus Maternus *De errore prof. relig.* 13: “Serapis vocatus et intra corpus hominis conlatus talia respondit;” and the phrase *ἐγκατοχήσας τῷ Σαράπιδι* (*Inscr. Smyrn.* 3163, ap. Wolff, *de Nov.*)

² Porphyry calls these inferior spirits *δαιμόνια ὑλικά*, and Proclus (*ad Tim.* 142) defines the distinction thus: *τῶν δαιμόνων οἱ μὲν ἐν τῇ συστάσει πλέον τὸ πύριον ἔχοντες ὁρατοὶ ὄντες οὐδὲν ἔχουσιν ἀντιτύπως, οἱ δὲ καὶ γῆς μετεληφότες ὑποπύπτουσι τῇ ἀφῇ*. It is only the spirits

falls into a state of trance, mixed sometimes with exhausting agitation or struggle,¹ as in the case of the Pythia. And the importance attached to a right choice of time and circumstances for the induction of this trance reminds us of Plutarch's story, already mentioned, of the death of a Pythian priestess compelled to prophesy when possessed by an evil spirit. Another inconvenience in choosing a wrong time seems to have been that false answers were then given by the spirit, who, however, would warn the auditors that he could not give information,² or even that he would certainly tell falsehoods,³ on that particular occasion. Porphyry attributes this occasional falsity to some defect in the surrounding conditions,⁴ which confuses the spirit, and prevents him from speaking truly. For on descending into our atmosphere the spirits become subject to the laws and influences which rule mankind, and

who partake of earthly nature who are capable of being touched. These spirits may be of a rank inferior to mankind; Proclus, *ad Tim.* 24, calls them *ψυχὰς ἀποτύχουσας μὲν τοῦ ἀνθρωπικοῦ νοῦ, πρὸς δὲ τὰ ζῷα ἐχούσας διάθεσιν*.

¹ οὐ φέρει με τοῦ δοχῆος ἡ τάλαινα καρδίᾳ (Procl. *ad Rempublicam*, 380) is the exclamation of a spirit whose recipient can no longer sustain his presence.

² Eus. *Pr. Ev.* vi. 5, σήμερον οὐκ ἐπέοικε λέγειν ἀστρῶν ὁδοὶ ἱρήν.

³ *Ibid.* κλεῖε βίην κάρτος τε λόγων· ψευδήγορα λέξω: "Try no longer to enchain me with your words; I shall tell you falsehoods."

⁴ ἡ καταστάσις τοῦ περιέχοντος. Eus. *Pr. Ev.* iv. 5, καὶ τὸ περιέχον ἀναγκάζον ψευδῇ γίνεσθαι τὰ μαντεῖα, οὐ τοὺς παρόντας ἐκόντας προστιθέναι τὸ ψεῦδος. . . . πέφηνεν ἄρα, adds Porphyry with satisfaction, πόθεν πολλάκις τὸ ψεῦδος συνίσταται.

are not therefore entirely free agents.¹ When a confusion of this kind occurs, the prudent inquirer should defer his researches,—a rule with which inexperienced investigators fail to comply.²

Let us suppose, however, that a favourable day has been secured, and also, not less important, a “guileless intermediary.”³ Some confined space would then be selected for the expected manifestations, “so that the influence should not be too widely diffused.”⁴ This place seems sometimes to have been made dark,—a circumstance which has not escaped the satire of the Christian controversialist,⁵ whose derision is still further excited by the “barbarous yells and singing”⁶ with which the unseen visitant was allured,—a characteristic, it may be noticed in passing, of shahmanistic practices, wherever they have been found to prevail. During these proceedings the human agent appears to have

¹ Porph. ap. Philoponum, *de Mundi Creat.* iv. 20, with the comments of Philoponus, whose main objection to these theories lies in their interference with the freedom of the will.

² *Pr. Ev.* vi. 5, οἱ δὲ μένουσι καὶ λέγειν ἀναγκάζουσι διὰ τὴν ἀμαθίαν.

³ *Ibid.* v. 8, κάππεσεν ἀμφὶ κάρηνον ἀμωμήτοιο δοχῆος.

⁴ καὶ ἅμα ἀποστηρίζοντες αὐτὸ ἐνταῦθα ἐν τινι στερέῳ χωρίῳ ὥστε μὴ ἐπιπολὺ διαχεῖσθαι, *Iamb. de Myst.* iii. 14. The maxims of Iamblichus in these matters are in complete conformity with those of Porphyry.

⁵ *Eus. Pr. Ev.* iv. 1, καὶ τὸ σκότος δὲ οὐ μικρὰ συνεργεῖν τῇ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς ὑποθέσει.

⁶ *Ibid.* v. 12, ἀσήμοις τε καὶ βαρβάροις ἤχοις τε καὶ φωναῖς κηλουμένοι.

fallen into an abnormal slumber, which extinguished for the time his own identity, and allowed the spirit to speak through his lips,—“to contrive a voice for himself through a mortal instrument.”¹ In such speeches, of which several are preserved to us, the informing spirit alludes to the human being through whom he is speaking in the third person, as “the mortal” or “the recipient;” of himself he speaks in the first person, or occasionally in the third person, as “the god” or “the king.”²

The controlling spirits do not, however, always content themselves with this vicarious utterance. They appear sometimes, as already indicated, in visible and tangible form. Of this phase of the proceedings, however, Eusebius has preserved to us but scanty notices. His mind is preoccupied with the presumption and *bizarrierie* of the spirits, who sometimes profess themselves to be (for instance) the sun and moon; sometimes insist on being called by barbarous names, and talking a barbarous jargon.³ The precise nature of such appearances had been, it seems, in dispute since the days of Pythagoras, who conjectured that the apparition was an emanation from the spirit, but not, strictly speaking, the spirit itself.⁴

¹ *Ibid.* v. 8 αὐλοῦ δ' ἐκ βροτέοιο φλῆην ἐτεκνώσατο φωνήν.

² φῶς, βροτός, δοχεύς. *Pr. Ev.* v. 9, λύετε λοιπὸν ἀνακτα, βροτὸς θεὸν οὐκέτι χωρεῖ.

³ *Pr. Ev.* v. 10 (quoting Porph. *ad Apoc.*), τί δὲ καὶ τὰ ἄσημα βούλεται ὀνόματα καὶ τῶν ἀσήμεων τὰ βάρβαρα πρὸ τῶν ἐκάστῳ οἰκείων, etc.

⁴ Pythag. ap. Aen. Gaz. ap. Theophr. p. 61, Boisson. πότερον

In the Neoplatonic view, these spirits entered by a process of "introduction" ¹ into a material body temporarily prepared for them; or sometimes it was said that "the pure flame was compressed into a sacred Form." ² Those spirits who had already been accustomed to appear were best instructed as to how to appear again; but some of them were inclined to mischief, especially if the persons present showed a careless temper. ³

θεοὶ ἢ δαίμονες ἢ τούτων ἀπόβρομαι, καὶ πότερον δαίμων εἰς ἄλλος εἶναι δοκῶν ἢ πολλοὶ καὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν διαφέροντες, οἱ μὲν ἡμεροὶ, οἱ δ' ἄγριοι, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐνίοτε ἀλλήθῃ λέγοντες οἱ δ' ὅλως κίβδηλοι . . . τέλος προῖεται δαίμονος ἀπόβροίαν εἶναι τὸ φάσμα.

¹ εἰσκρισις. See Lob. *Agf.* p. 730.

² *Pr. Ev.* v. 8:— ἱεροῖσι τύποις

συνθλιβομένου πυρὸς ἀγροῦ.

I may just notice here the connection between this idea of the entrance of a spirit into a quasi-human form built up for the occasion, and that recrudescence of idol-worship which marks one phase of Neoplatonism. In an age when such primitive practices as "carrying the dried corpse of a parent round the fields that he might see the state of the crops" (*Spencer's Sociology*, § 154), were no longer possible, this new method of giving temporary materiality to disembodied intelligences suggested afresh that it might be practicable so to prepare an image as that a spirit would be content to live there permanently. An oracle in Pausanias (ix. 38) curiously illustrates this view of statues. The land of the Orchomenians was infested by a spirit which sat on a stone. The Pythia ordered them to make a brazen image of the spectre and fasten it with iron to the stone. The spirit would still be there, but he would now be permanently fixed down, and, being enclosed in a statue, he would no longer form an obnoxious spectacle.

³ *Pr. Ev.* v. 8, ἔθος ποιησάμενοι τῆς ἐαυτῶν παρουσίας εὐμαθέστερον φοιτῶσι καὶ μάλιστα ἐὰν καὶ φύσει ἀγαθοὶ τυγχάνωσιν, οἱ δὲ, κὰν ἔθος ἔχωσι τοῦ παραγίνεσθαι, βλάβην τινὰ προθυμοῦνται ποιεῖν, καὶ μάλιστα ἐὰν ἀμελέστερόν τις δοκῇ ἀναστρέφεσθαι ἐν τοῖς πράγμασι. This notion

After a time the spirit becomes anxious to depart; but is not always able to quit the intermediary as promptly as it desires. We possess several oracles uttered under these circumstances, and giving directions which we can but imperfectly understand. It appears that the recipient, for what reason we are left to conjecture, was in some way bound with withes and enveloped in fine linen, which had to be cut and unwrapped at the end of the ceremony.¹ The human agent had then to be set on his feet and taken from the corner where he had been outstretched, and a singular collaboration seems to have taken place, the spirit giving his orders to the bystanders by a voice issuing from the recipient's still senseless form.² At last the spirit departs, and the recipient is set free

Eusebius, in a passage marked by strong common sense,³ has pointed out some obvious objections to oracles obtained in this fashion. Some of these so-

of a congruity between the inquirer and the responding spirit is curiously illustrated by a story of Caracalla (Dio Cass. lxxvii.), who ἐψυχαγόγησε μὲν ἄλλας τέ τινας καὶ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ τε Κομμόδου ψυχὴν· εἶπε δ' οὖν οὐδεὶς αὐτῷ οὐδέν, πλὴν τοῦ Κομμόδου. "Ἐφη γὰρ ταῦτα· βαίνε δίκης ἄσσον, θεοὶ ἦν αἰτοῦσι Σεβήρῳ. No ghost would address Caracalla except the ghost of Commodus, who spoke to denounce to him his doom.

¹ *Pr. Ev.* v. 8:—παύεο δὴ περιφρων δάρων, ἀνάπαυε δὲ φῶτα,
θάμνων ἐκλύων πολιδὸν τύπον, ἥδ' ἀπὸ γυνίων
Νειλαίην ὀθόνην χερσὶν στιβαρῶς ἀπάειρας.

And again, when the bystanders delay the release, the spirit exclaims—

σινδόνας ἀμπέτασον νεφέλην, λῦσόν τε δοχῆα.

² *Pr. Ev.* v. 8;—ὑψίπρωρον αἶρε ταρσόν, ἴσχε βάξιν ἐκ μυχῶν. And again, ἀρατε φῶτα γαίηθεν ἀναστήσαντες ἐταῖροι, etc.

³ *Pr. Ev.* iv. 2.

called "recipients," it appears, had been put to the torture and had made damaging confessions. Further penalties had induced them to explain how their fraud was carried out. The darkness and secrecy of the proceedings were in any case suspicious; and the futility of many of the answers obtained, or their evident adaptation to the wishes of the inquirers, pointed too plainly to their human origin. The actual method of producing certain phenomena has exercised the ingenuity of other Fathers. Thus figures could be shown in a bowl of water by using a moveable bottom, or lights could be made to fly about in a dark room by releasing a vulture with flaming tow tied to its claws.¹

But in spite of these contemptuous criticisms the Christian Fathers, as is well known, were disposed to believe in the genuineness of some at least of these communications, and showed much anxiety to induce the oracles, which often admitted the greatness and wisdom, to acknowledge also the divinity, of Christ.²

Eusebius himself, in another work,³ adduces a letter of Constantine's describing an oracle said to have been uttered directly by Apollo "from a certain dark hole," in which the god asserted that he could no longer speak the truth on account of

¹ Pseudo-Origen, *Philosophumena*, p. 73.

² *Pr. Ev.* iv. iii. 7. *Aug. de Civit. Dei*, xix. 23. *Lact. Instit.* iv. 13.

³ *Vit. Const.* ii. 50; cf. Wolff, *de Noviss.* p. 4.

the number of saints who were now on the earth. But this has so little the air of an Apolline manifestation that it is suspected that a Christian man had crept into a cave and delivered this unauthorised response with a polemical object.¹

Into so obscure, so undignified a region of mingled fraud and mystery does it seem that, by the admission of friends and foes alike, the oracles of Greece had by this time fallen. Compared with what had been stripped away, that which was left may seem to us like the narrow vault of the Delian sanctuary compared with the ruined glories of that temple-covered isle. There was not, indeed, in Porphyry's view anything inconsistent with the occasional presence and counsel of a lofty and a guardian spirit. There was nothing which need make him doubt that the Greeks had been led upwards through their long history by some providential power. Nay, he himself cites, as we shall see, recent oracles higher in tone than any which have preceded them. Yet as compared with the early ardour of that imaginative belief which peopled heaven with gods and earth with heroes, we feel that we are now sent back to "beggarly elements;" that the task of sifting truth from falsehood amid so much deception and incompetency on the part both of visible and

¹ The well-known story, Γρηγόριος τῷ Σατανᾷ Εἰσελθε—Greg. Nyss. 548 (and to be found in all lives of Gregory Thaumaturgus), illustrates this Christian rivalry with pagan oracles or apparitions.

invisible agencies,¹ of erecting a consistent creed on such mean and shifting foundations, might well rebut even the patient ardour of this most untiring of "seekers after God." And when we see him recognising all this with painful clearness, giving vent, in that letter to Anebo which is so striking an example of absolute candour in an unscrupulous and polemic age, to his despair at the obscurity which seems to deepen as he proceeds, we cannot but wonder that we do not see him turn to take refuge in the new religion with its offers of certainty and peace.

Why, we shall often ask, should men so much in earnest as the Neoplatonists have taken, with the gospel before them, the side they took? Why should they have preferred to infuse another allegory into the old myths which had endured so much? to force the Pythian Apollo, so simple-hearted through all his official ambiguity, to strain his hexameters into the ineffable yearnings of a theosophic age? For we seem to see the issues so clearly! when we take up Augustine instead of Proclus we feel so instantly that we have changed to the winning side! But to Greek minds—and the glory of the Syrian Porphyry was that, of all barbarians, he became the most intensely Greek—the struggle

¹ The disappointing falsity of the manifesting spirits who pretended to be the souls of departed friends, etc., is often alluded to; e.g. in the *ad Anchonem*: οἱ δὲ εἶναι μὲν ἔξωθεν τίθενται τὸ ὑπήκουον γένος ἀπατηλῆς φύσεως, παντόμορφόν τε καὶ πολίτροπον, ὑποκρινόμενον καὶ θεοὺς καὶ δαίμονας καὶ ψυχὰς τεθνηκότων, etc.

presented itself in a very different fashion. They were fighting not for an effete mythology, but for the whole Past of Greece; nay, as it seemed in a certain sense, for the civilisation of the world. The repulse of Xerxes had stirred in the Greeks the consciousness of their uniqueness as compared with the barbarism on every side. And now, when Hellenism was visibly dying away, there awoke in the remaining Greeks a still more momentous conception, the conception of the uniqueness and preciousness of Greek life not only in space but in duration, as compared not only with its barbarian compeers, but with the probable future of the world. It was no longer against the Great King, but against Time itself, that the unequal battle must be waged. And while Time's impersonal touch was slowly laid upon all the glory which had been, a more personal foe was seen advancing from the same East from whose onset Greece had already escaped, "but so as by fire." Christ, like Xerxes, came against the Greek spirit *Συριγγες ἄρμα διώκων*, driving a Syrian car; the tide of conquest was rolling back again, and the East was claiming an empire such as the West had never won.

We, indeed, knowing all the flower of European Christianity in Dante's age, all its ripening fruit in our own, may see that this time from the East light came; we may trust and claim that we are living now among the scattered forerunners of

such types of beauty and of goodness as Athens never knew. But if so much even of our own ideal is in the future still, how must it have been to those whose longest outlook could not overpass the dreary centuries of barbarism and decay? So vast a spiritual revolution must needs bring to souls of differing temper very different fates. Happy were they who, like Augustine and Origen, could frankly desert the old things and rejoice that all things were become new. Happy, too, were those few saintly souls—an Antoninus or a Plotinus—whose lofty calm no spiritual revolution seemed able to reach or mar. But the pathetic destiny was that of men like Julian or Porphyry, men who were disqualified from leading the race onward into a noble future merely because they so well knew and loved an only less noble past.

And yet it is not for long that we can take Porphyry as an example of a man wandering in the twilight between "dying lights and dawning," between an outworn and an untried faith. The last chapter in the history of oracles is strangely connected with the last stage of the spiritual history of this upward-striving man.

For it was now that Porphyry was to encounter an influence, a doctrine, an aim, more enchanting than Homer's mythology, profounder than Apollo's oracles, more Christian, I had almost written, than Christianity itself. More Christian at least than

such Christianity as had chiefly met Porphyry's eyes; more Christian than the violence of bishops, the wrangles of heretics, the fanaticism of slaves, was that single-hearted and endless effort after the union of the soul with God which filled every moment of the life of Plotinus, and which gave to his living example a potency and a charm which his writings never can renew.¹ "Without father, without mother, without descent," a figure appearing solitary as Melchisedek on the scene of history, charged with a single blessing and lost in the unknown, we may yet see in this chief of mystics the heir of Plato, and affirm that it is he who has completed the cycle of Greek civilisation by adding to that long gallery of types of artist and warrior, philosopher and poet, the stainless image of the saint.

It may be that the holiness which he aimed at is not for man. It may be that ecstasy comes best unsought, and that the still small voice is heard seldomer in the silence of the wilderness than through the thunder of human toil and amid human passion's fire.

But those were days of untried capacities, of unbounded hopes. In the Neoplatonist lecture-

¹ Eunapius (*vit. Porph.*) manages to touch the heart, in spite of his affectations, when he describes the friendship between Porphyry and Plotinus. Of Porphyry's first visit to Rome he says:—*τὴν μεγίστην Ῥώμην ἰδεῖν ἐπιθυμήσας . . . ἐπειδὴ τάχιστα εἰς αὐτὴν ἀφίκετο καὶ τῷ μεγίστῳ Πλωτίνῳ συνῆλθεν εἰς ὁμίλιαν, πάντων ἐπελάθετο τῶν ἄλλων, κ.τ.λ.*

room, as at the Christian love-feast, it seemed that religion had no need to compromise, that all this complex human spirit could be absorbed and transfigured in one desire.

Counsels of perfection are the aliment of strenuous souls, and henceforth, in each successive book of Porphyry's, we see him rising higher, resting more confidently in those joys and aspirations which are the heritage of all high religions, and the substance of the communion of saints.

And gradually, as he dwells more habitually in the thought of the supreme and ineffable Deity, the idea of a visible or tangible communion with any Being less august becomes repugnant to his mind. For what purpose should he draw to him those unknown intelligences from the ocean of environing souls? "For on those things which he desires to know there is no prophet nor diviner who can declare to him the truth, but himself only, by communion with God, who is enshrined indeed in his heart."¹ "By a sacred silence we do Him honour, and by pure thoughts of what He is."² "Holding Him fast, and being made like unto Him, let us present ourselves, a holy sacrifice, for our offering unto God."³

¹ *De Abst.* ii. 54.

² *Ibid.* ii. 34, διὰ δὲ σιγῆς καθαρᾶς καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτοῦ καθαρῶν ἐννοιῶν θρησκεύομεν αὐτῷ.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 34, δεῖ δὲ συναφθέντας καὶ ὁμοιωθέντας αὐτῷ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀναγωγὴν θυσίαν ἱερὰν προσάγαγεῖν τῷ θεῷ.

And in his letter to the well-loved wife of his old age,—than which we find no higher expression of the true Platonic love (so often degraded and misnamed)—no nobler charge and counsel of man to woman in all the stores which antiquity has bequeathed,—in this last utterance we find him risen above all doubt and controversy, and rapt in the contemplation of that Being whom “no prayers can move and no sacrifice honour, nor the abundance of offerings find favour in His sight; only the inspired thought fixed firmly on Him has cognisance of God indeed.”¹ It may seem that as we enter on this region we have left oracles behind. But it is not so. The two last oracles which I shall cite, and which are among the most remarkable of all, are closely connected with this last period of Porphyry’s life. The first of them is found, by no chance we may be sure, on a leaf of the manuscript which contains his letter to Marcella. It is introduced to us by an unknown writer as “an oracle concerning the Eternal God.”²

¹ τὸ ἐνθεον φρόνημα καλῶς ἡδρασμένον συνάπτεται τῷ θεῷ. —See the *Ad Marcellam* passim.

² This oracle was very probably actually delivered in a shrine, as the utterances of this period were often tinged with Neoplatonism. I have followed Wolff’s emendations, and must refer the reader to his *Porph. Fragm.* p. 144, and especially his *Addit. IV. de Daemonibus*, p. 225, in support of the substantial accuracy of my rendering. It is impossible to reproduce all the theology which this hymn contains; I have tried to bring out the force of the most central and weighty expressions, such as ἀενάοις ὀχετοῖσι τιθηνῶν νοῦν ἀτάλαντον. The oracle will also be found in Steuchus, *de Perenni Philosophia*,

“O God ineffable, eternal Sire,
 Throned on the whirling spheres, the astral fire,
 Hid in whose heart thy whole creation lies,—
 The whole world’s wonder mirrored in thine eyes,—
 List thou thy children’s voice, who draw anear,
 Thou hast begotten us, thou too must hear!
 Each life thy life her Fount, her Ocean knows,
 Fed while it fosters, filling as it flows;
 Wrapt in thy light the star-set cycles roll,
 And worlds within thee stir into a soul;
 But stars and souls shall keep their watch and way,
 Nor change the going of thy lonely day.

Some sons of thine, our Father, King of kings,
 Rest in the sheen and shelter of thy wings,—
 Some to strange hearts the unspoken message bear,
 Sped on thy strength through the haunts and homes of
 air,—

Some where thine honour dwelleth hope and wait,
 Sigh for thy courts and gather at thy gate;
 These from afar to thee their praises bring,
 Of thee, albeit they have not seen thee, sing;
 Of thee the Father wise, the Mother mild,
 Thee in all children the eternal Child,
 Thee the first Number and harmonious Whole,
 Form in all forms, and of all souls the Soul.”

The second oracle above alluded to, the last which
 I shall quote, was given, as Porphyry tells us, at
 Delphi to his friend Amelius, who inquired, “Where
 was now Plotinus’ soul?”¹

iii. 14; Orelli, *Opusc. gr. vett. sentent.* i. 319; and Mai’s edition of
 the *Ad Marcellam*.

¹ Porph. *vit. Plot.* 22. It is seldom that the genuineness of an

Whatever be the source of this poem, it stands out to us as one of the most earnest utterances of antiquity, though it has little of classical perfection of form. Nowhere, indeed, is the contest more apparent between the intensity of the emotions which are struggling for utterance and the narrow limits of human speech, which was composed to deal with the things that are known and visible, and not with those that are inconceivable and unseen.

Little, in truth, it is which the author of this oracle could express, less which the translator can render; but there is enough to show once more the potency of an elect soul, what a train of light she may leave behind her as she departs on her unknown way; when for those who have lived in her presence, but can scarcely mourn her translation, the rapture of love fades into the rapture of worship. Plotinus was "the eagle soaring above the tomb of Plato;" no wonder that the eyes which followed his flight must soon be blinded with the sun.

"Pure spirit—once a man—pure spirits now
Greet thee rejoicing, and of these art thou;

oracle can be established on grounds which would satisfy the critical historian. But this oracle has better external evidence than most others. Of Porphyry's own good faith there is no question, and though we know less of the character of his fellow-philosopher Amelius, it seems unlikely that he would have wished to deceive Porphyry on an occasion so solemn as the death of their beloved master, or even that he could have deceived him as to so considerable an undertaking as a journey to Delphi.

Not vainly was thy whole soul alway bent
 With one same battle and one the same intent
 Through eddying cloud and earth's bewildering roar
 To win her bright way to that stainless shore.
 Ay, 'mid the salt spume of this troublous sea,
 This death in life, this sick perplexity,
 Oft on thy struggle through the obscure unrest
 A revelation opened from the Blest—
 Showed close at hand the goal thy hope would win,
 Heaven's kingdom round thee and thy God within.¹
 So sure a help the eternal Guardians gave,
 From life's confusion so were strong to save,
 Upheld thy wandering steps that sought the day
 And set them steadfast on the heavenly way.
 Nor quite even here on thy broad brows was shed
 The sleep which shrouds the living, who are dead ;
 Once by God's grace was from thine eyes unfurled
 This veil that screens the immense and whirling world,
 Once, while the spheres around thee in music ran,
 Was very Beauty manifest to man ;—
 Ah, once to have seen her, once to have known her there,
 For speech too sweet, for earth too heavenly fair !
 But now the tomb where long thy soul had lain
 Bursts, and thy tabernacle is rent in twain ;
 Now from about thee, in thy new home above,
 Has perished all but life, and all but love,—
 And on all lives and on all loves outpoured
 Free grace and full, a Spirit from the Lord,

¹ ἐφάνη γοῦν τῷ Πλωτίνῳ σκοπὸς ἐγγύθει ναίων· τέλος γὰρ αὐτῷ
 καὶ σκοπὸς ἦν τὸ ἐνωθῆναι καὶ πελάσαι τῷ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεῷ. "Ἐνυχε δὲ
 τετράκις πον, ὅτε συνήμην αὐτῷ, τοῦ σκοποῦ τούτου ἐνεργεῖα ἀρίστην
 καὶ οὐ δυνάμει.—(Porph. vit. Plot.)

High in that heaven whose windless vaults enfold
 Just men made perfect, and an age all gold.
 Thine own Pythagoras is with thee there,
 And sacred Plato in that sacred air,
 And whoso followed, and all high hearts that knew
 In death's despite what deathless Love can do.
 To God's right hand they have scaled the starry way—
 Pure spirits these, thy spirit pure as they.
 Ah saint! how many and many an anguish past,
 To how fair haven art thou come at last!
 On thy meek head what Powers their blessing pour,
 Filled full with life, and rich for evermore!"

This, so far as we know, was the last utterance of the Pythian priestess. Once more, indeed, a century afterwards, a voice was heard at Delphi. But that voice seems rather to have been, in Plutarch's phrase, "a cry floating of itself over solitary places," than the deliverance of any recognised priestess, or from any abiding shrine. For no shrine was standing more. The words which answered the Emperor Julian's search were but the whisper of desolation, the last and loveliest expression of a sanctity that had passed away. A strange coincidence! that from that Delphian valley, whence, as the legend ran, had sounded the first of all hexameters,¹—the call, as in the childhood of the world, to "birds to bring their feathers and bees their wax" to build by Castaly the nest-like habitation

¹ ξυμφέρετε πτερὰ τ' οἰωνοὶ κηρόν τε μέλιτται.—Plut. *de Pyth.* xvii.; and reff. ap. Hendess, *Orac. Græc.* p. 36.

of the young new-entering god, — from that same ruined place where “to earth had fallen the glorious dwelling,” from the dry channel where “the water-springs that spake were quenched and dead,” — should issue in unknown fashion the last fragment of Greek poetry which has moved the hearts of men, the last Greek hexameters which retain the ancient cadence, the majestic melancholy flow!¹

Stranger still, and of deeper meaning, is the fate which has ordained that Delphi, born with the birth of Greece, symbolising in her teaching such light and truth as the ancient world might know, silenced once only in her long career, and silenced not by Christ, but by Antichrist, should have proclaimed in her last triumphant oracle the canonisation of the last of the Greeks, should have responded with her last sigh and echo to the appeal of the last of the Romans.

And here I shall leave the story of Greek oracles. It may be, indeed, that some strange and solitary divinities—the god Jaribolus at Palmyra,² the god Marnas at Gaza,³ the god Besa at

¹ εἶπατε τῷ βασιλῇ, χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος αὐλά·
οὔκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην,
οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσιν· ἀπέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

—Ge. Cedren. *Hist. Comp.* i. 304; and see Mr. Swinburne's poem, “The Last Oracle.”

² *Inscr. Gr.* 4483 ap Wolff, *de Noviss.* p. 27. There is, however, no proof of Jaribolian utterance later than A.D. 242.

³ Marc. Diac. *vit. Porph. Episc.* ap. *Acta Sanctorum*, and Wolff, *de Noviss.* p. 26. Circ. A.D. 400.

Abydos¹—still uttered from time to time some perishing prophecy, some despairing protest against the new victorious faith. But that such oracles there still were is proved rather from Christian legislation than from heathen records. On these laws I will not dwell, nor recount how far the Christian emperors fell from their divine ideal when they punished by pillage,² by torture,³ and by death⁴ the poor unlearned "villagers," whose only crime it was that they still found in the faith of their fathers the substance of things hoped for, and an evidence of things not seen. Such stains will mar the noblest revolutions, but must not blind us to the fact that a spiritual revolution follows only on a spiritual need. The end of the Greek oracles was determined not from without, but from within. They had passed through all their stages. Fetishism, Shahmanism, Nature-worship, Polytheism, even Monotheism and Mysticism, had found in turn a home in their immemorial shrines. Their utterances had reflected every method in which man has

¹ Amm. Marc. xix. 12 (A.D. 359).

² *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10 (Theodosius I.)

³ Amm. Marc. xxi. 12 (Constantius).

⁴ *Cod. Justin.* ix. 18 (Constantius); *Theod. leg. Novell.* iii. (Theodosius II.) These laws identify paganism as far as possible with magic, and, by a singular inversion, Augustine quotes Virgil's authority (*Aen.* iv. 492) in defence of the persecution of his own faith. See Maury, *Magie*, etc., p. 127. The last struggle of expiring paganism was in defence of the oracular temple of Serapis at Alexandria, A.D. 389

sought communion with the Unseen, from systematic experiment to intuitive ecstasy. They had completed the cycle of their scripture from its Theogony to its Apocalypse; it was time that a stronger wave of revelation should roll over the world, and that what was best and truest in the old religion should be absorbed into and identified with the new.¹

And if there be some who feel that the youth, the *naïveté*, the unquestioning conviction, must perish not from one religion only, but from all; that the more truly we conceive of God, the more unimaginable He becomes to us, and the more infinite, and the more withdrawn; that we can no longer "commune with Him from oak or rock as a young man communes with a maid;"—to such men the story of the many pathways by which mankind has striven to become cognisant of the Unseen may have an aspect of hope as well as of despondency.

For before we despair of a question as unanswerable we must know that it has been rightly asked. And there are problems which can become clearly

¹ I need hardly remind the reader that the Church continued till the Renaissance to believe in the reality of the Greek oracles, though condemning the "demons" who inspired them. To refer them, in fact, entirely to illusion and imposture is an argument not without danger for the advocate of any revealed religion. "Celui," says M. Bouché-Leclercq, "qui croit à la Providence et à l'efficacité de la prière doit se rappeler qu'il accepte tous les principes sur lesquels repose la divination antique."

defined to us only by the aid of premature and imperfect solutions. There are many things which we should never have known had not inquiring men before us so often deemed vainly that they knew.

Suspense of judgment, indeed, in matters of such moment, is so irksome an attitude of mind, that we need not wonder if confidence of view on the one side is met by a corresponding confidence on the other; if the trust felt by the mass of mankind in the adequacy of one or other of the answers to these problems which have been already obtained is rebutted by the decisive assertion that all these answers have been proved futile and that it is idle to look for more.

Yet such was not the temper of those among the Greeks who felt, as profoundly perhaps as we, the darkness and the mystery of human fates. To them it seemed no useless or unworthy thing to ponder on these chief concerns of man with that patient earnestness which has unlocked so many problems whose solution once seemed destined to be for ever unknown. "For thus will God," as Sophocles says in one of those passages (*Fr.* 707) whose high serenity seems to answer our perplexities as well as his own—

"Thus then will God to wise men riddling show
Such hidden lore as not the wise can know;
Fools in a moment deem his meaning plain,
His lessons lightly learn, and learn in vain."

And even now, in the face of philosophies of materialism and of negation so far more powerful than any which Sophocles had to meet, there are yet some minds into which, after all, a doubt may steal,—whether we have indeed so fully explained away the beliefs of the world's past, whether we can indeed so assuredly define the beliefs of its future,—or whether it may not still befit us to track with fresh feet the ancient mazes, to renew the world-old desire, and to set no despairing limit to the knowledge or the hopes of man.

VIRGIL

"Light among the vanished ages ; star that gildest yet this
phantom shore ;
Golden branch amid the shadows, kings and realms that set to
rise no more."

IN literature, as in life, affection and reverence may reach a point which disposes to silence rather than to praise. The same ardour of worship which prompts to missions or to martyrdom when a saving knowledge of the beloved object can be communicated so, will shrink from all public expression when the beauty which it reveres is such as can be made manifest to each man only from within. A sense of desecration mingles with the sense of incapacity in describing what is so mysterious, so glorious, and so dear.

Perhaps the admirer may hear the object of his reverence ignorantly misapprehended, unwisely judged. Still he will shrink from speech ; he will be unwilling to seem to proffer his own poor and disputable opinion on matters which lie so far above any support which he can give. Yet, possibly, if

his admiration has notoriously been shared for nineteen centuries by all whose admiration was best worth having, he may venture to attempt to prove the world right where others have attempted the bolder task of proving it mistaken; or rather, if the matter in question be one by its very nature incapable of proof, he may without presumption restate in terms adapted to modern readers the traditional judgment of sixty generations of men.¹

The set which the German criticism of this century has made against Virgil is a perfectly explicable, and in one sense a perfectly justifiable thing. It is one among many results which have followed from the application of the historical faculty, pure and simple, to the judgment of Art. Since every work of art is a historical product, it can be used to illus-

¹ In writing on an author who has been so constantly discussed for many centuries it is impossible to refer each fragment of criticism to its original source. Most of the sounder reflections on Virgil have occurred to many minds and long ago, and form an anonymous—almost an œcumenical—tradition. Among modern writers on Virgil, I have consulted Bernhardt, Boissier, Canth, Comparetti, Conington, Gladstone, Henry, Heyne, Keble, Long, Nettleship, Ribbeck, Sainte-Beuve, Sellar, Teuffel, Wagner, etc.; some of them with mere dissent and surprise, others—especially Boissier and Conington—with great interest and profit. But next to Virgil's own poems, I think that the *Divina Commedia* is the most important aid to his right apprehension. The exquisite truth and delicacy of Dante's conception of his great master become more and more apparent if the works of the two are studied in connection.

Since this essay was first published, the greatest poet of our times has offered to Virgil a crowning homage,—in accents that recall his own.

trate the growth of the national life from which it springs; it can be represented as the necessary result of its epoch and its environment. The several arts, however, offer very different facility to the scientific historian. Music, the most unmixedly imaginative of the arts, has baffled all efforts to correlate her growth with the general march of society. Painting bears a more intimate relation to life, and in much of the preference which has been lately shown for early *naïveté* over self-conscious excellence we may detect a mixture of the historical with the purely æsthetic instinct. The historic instinct, indeed, works in admirably with the tastes of an elaborate civilisation. For the impulse of historic science is naturally towards the *Origines* or sources of things; it seeks to track styles and processes to their fountain-head, and to find them exhibiting themselves without self-consciousness or foreign admixture; it would even wish to eliminate the idiosyncrasies of individual artists from its generalised estimate of the genius of a nation. And in highly-cultivated societies there is a somewhat similar craving—a wish to escape from all that speaks of effort or preparation, into the refreshing simplicity of a spontaneous age. This craving was strongly felt under the Roman Empire; it is potent among ourselves; it is wholly natural and innocent so long as it is not allowed to sway us in our estimate of the highest art.

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But if the historical spirit can thus modify the judgments passed upon painting, much more is this the case with regard to poetry. For poetry is the most condensed and pregnant of all historical phenomena; it is a kind of crystallised deposit of the human spirit. It is most necessary that the historian and the philologist should be allowed free range over this rich domain. And there is no doubt a sense in which poems, as they become more remote from us, are fuller of the rough reality of things. There is a sense in which the song of the *Fratres Arvales* is of more value than the Fourth Eclogue. And there is a sense—and this is a point on which the Germans have especially dwelt—in which the whole Latin literature of the Augustan age, whose outer form, at least, is so confessedly derived from Greek models, is of less interest than those models themselves. If we wish to understand the native type, the original essence of epic or lyric poetry, we must go to Homer and not to Virgil, to Sappho and not to Horace. Yet this test, like all sweeping and *à priori* methods of estimating works of art, requires in practice so many limitations as to be almost valueless. It is impossible to judge a literature by its originality alone, without condemning much that is best in our modern literatures more severely than we condemn the Augustan poets. Imitation is very much a matter of chronology; it may be conscious or un-

conscious,—ostentatious or concealed,—but as the world goes on, it tends irresistibly to form a larger and larger element in all new productions. And yet each new production may be in essentials superior to its type or forerunner. Its relative merit can be determined by experience alone—can only be judged, for instance, in the case of poetry by the uncertain and difficult process of comparing the amount of delight and elevation received from each work by the consensus of duly qualified men. For, in the face of some recent German criticism, it seems important to repeat that in order to judge poetry it is before all things necessary to enjoy it. We may all desire that historical and philological science should push her dominion into every recess of human action and human speech. But we must utter some protest when the very heights of Parnassus are invaded by a spirit which surely is not Science, but her unmeaning shadow;—a spirit which would degrade every masterpiece of human genius into the mere pabulum of hungry professors, and which values a poet's text only as a field for the rivalries of sterile pedantry and arbitrary conjecture.

It is sometimes said, *à propos* of the new unction with which physical science has assumed the office of the preacher, that men of the world must be preached to either by men of the world or by saints—not by persons, however eminent and right-

minded, whose emotions have been confined to the laboratory. There is something of a similar incongruity in the attitude of a German commentator laboriously endeavouring to throw a new light on some point of delicate feeling or poetic propriety. Thus one of them objects to Dido's "auburn tress" on the ground that a widow's hair should be of a darker colour. Another questions whether a broken heart can be properly termed "a fresh wound," if a lady has been suffering from it for more than a week. A third bitterly accuses Virgil of exaggerating the felicity of the Golden Age. And Ribbeck alters the text of Virgil, in defiance of all the manuscripts, because the poet's picture (A. xii. 55) of Amata, "self-doomed to die, clasping for the last time her impetuous son-in-law," seems to him tame and unsatisfactory. By the alteration of *moritura* into *monitura* he is able to represent Amata as clinging to Turnus, not "with the intention of killing herself," but "with the intention of giving advice," which he considers as the more impressive and fitting attitude for a mother-in-law.¹

It seems somewhat doubtful whither this lofty *à priori* road may lead us. And yet it is impossible to criticise any form of art without the introduction

¹ A single instance will give an idea of Ribbeck's fitness to deal with metrical questions. In A. ix. 67, "qua temptet ratione aditus, et quae via clausos," he reads (against all the MSS.) *et qua vi clausos*, and proves at some length the elegance of his trispondaic termination.

of subjective impressions of some kind. It would be in vain to attempt to give any such general exposition of poetical excellence as should carry conviction to all minds. Some obvious shortcomings may be pointed out, some obvious merits insisted on; but when a higher region is reached we find that a susceptibility to the specific power of poetry is no more communicable than an ear for music. To most readers the subtle, the unexpressed, the infinite element in poetry such as Virgil's will remain for ever unacknowledged and unknown. Like the golden bough which unlocked the secrets of the underworld—

“Itself will follow, and scarce thy touch await,
If thou be chosen, and if this be fate;
Else for no force shalt thou its coming feel,
Nor shear it from the stem with shattering steel.”¹

¹ A. vi. 146. The translations from Virgil which I have given in this essay, though faithful to his meaning, as I apprehend it, are not verbally exact; while, like all my predecessors, I have failed to convey any adequate notion of his music or his dignity, and may well fear the fate of Salmoneus, “who thought to rival with flash of lamps and tramp of horses the inimitable thunderbolt and storm.” But to reproduce a great poet in another language is as impossible as to reproduce Nature on canvas; and the same controversy between a literal and an impressional rendering divides landscape-painters and translators of poetry. In the case of an author so complex and profound as Virgil, every student will naturally discern a different phase of his significance, and it seems almost a necessary element in any attempt to criticise him that the critic should try to show the view which he takes of a few well-known passages. Mr. Morris’ brilliant and accurate version

A few general considerations, however, may at any rate serve to indicate the kinds of achievement at which Virgil aimed — the kinds of merit which are or are not to be looked for in his poems.

The range of human thoughts and emotions greatly transcends the range of such symbols as man has invented to express them; and it becomes therefore, the business of Art to use these symbols in a double way. They must be used for the direct representation of thought and feeling; but they must also be combined by so subtle an imagination as to suggest much which there is no means of directly expressing. And this can be done; for experience shows that it is possible so to arrange forms, colours, and sounds as to stimulate the imagination in a new and inexplicable way. This power makes the painter's art an imaginative as well as an imitative one; and gives birth to the art of the musician, whose symbols are hardly imitative at all, but express emotions which, till music suggests them, have been not only unknown but unimaginable. Poetry is both an imitative and an imaginative art. As a choice and condensed form of emotional speech, it possesses the reality which depends on its directly recalling our previous thoughts and feelings. But as a system of rhythmical and melodious effects — not indebted for their potency

represents a view so different from mine (though quite equally legitimate), that it would hardly have served my present purpose.

to their associated ideas alone—it appeals also to that mysterious power by which mere arrangements of sound can convey an emotion which no one could have predicted beforehand, and which no known laws can explain.

It is true that the limits of melody within which poetry works are very narrow. Between an exquisite and a worthless line there is no difference of sound in any way noticeable to an unintelligent ear. For the mere volume of sound—the actual sonority of the passage—is a quite subordinate element in the effect, which is produced mainly by relations and sequences of vowels and consonants, too varying and delicate to be reproducible by rule, although far more widely similar, among European languages at least, than is commonly perceived.¹ But this limitation of the means employed, which may itself be an added source of pleasure from the sense which it may give of difficulty overcome, is by no means without analogies in other forms of art. The poet thrills us with delight by a collocation of consonants, much as the etcher suggests infinity by a scratch of the needle.

¹ An interesting confirmation of this statement may be obtained by reading some passage of Latin poetry first according to the English and then according to the Italian or the revived Latin pronunciation. The effects observed in the first case are not altered—are merely enriched—by the transference of the vowel sounds to another scale. But this natural music of language (if we may so term it) is too complex a subject to be more than touched on here.

And, indeed, in poetry of the first order, almost every word (to use a mathematical metaphor) is raised to a higher power. It continues to be an articulate sound and a logical step in the argument; but it becomes also a musical sound and a centre of emotional force. It becomes a musical sound;—that is to say, its consonants and vowels are arranged to bear a relation to the consonants and vowels near it,—a relation of which accent, quantity, rhyme, assonance, and alliteration are specialised forms, but which may be of a character more subtle than any of these. And it becomes a centre of emotional force; that is to say, the complex associations which it evokes modify the associations evoked by other words in the same passage in a way quite distinct from grammatical or logical connection. The poet, therefore, must avoid two opposite dangers. If he thinks too exclusively of the music and the colouring of his verse—of the imaginative means of suggesting thought and feeling—what he writes will lack reality and sense. But if he cares only to communicate definite thought and feeling according to the ordinary laws of eloquent speech, his verse is likely to be deficient in magical and suggestive power.

And what is meant by the vague praise so often bestowed on Virgil's unequalled style is practically this, that he has been, perhaps, more successful than any other poet in fusing together the expressed and the suggested emotion; that he has discovered the hidden music which can give to every shade of

feeling its distinction, its permanence, and its charm; that his thoughts seem to come to us on the wings of melodies prepared for them from the foundation of the world. But in treating of so airy and abstract a matter it is well to have frequent recourse to concrete illustration. Before we attempt further description of Virgil's style, or his habitual mood of mind, let us clear our conceptions by a careful examination of some few passages from his poems. As we turn the leaves of the book we find it hard to know on what passages it were best to dwell. What varied memories are stirred by one line after another as we read! What associations of all dates, from Virgil's own lifetime down to the political debates of to-day! On this line¹ the poet's own voice faltered as he read. At this² Augustus and Octavia melted into passionate weeping. Here is the verse³ which Augustine quotes as typical in its majestic rhythm of all the pathos and the glory of pagan art, from which the Christian was bound to flee. This is the couplet⁴ which Fénelon could never read without admiring tears. This line Filippo Strozzi scrawled on his prison-wall, when he slew himself to avoid worse ill.⁵ These are the words⁶ which, like a trumpet-call,

¹ Hoc solum nomen quouiam de conjuge restat. A. iv. 324.

² Tu Marcellus eris, etc. A. vi. 883.

³ Infelix simulacrum atque ipsius umbra Creusae. A. ii. 772.

⁴ Aude, hospes, contemnere opes, et te quoque dignum
Finge deo, rebusque veni non asper egenis. A. viii. 364.

⁵ Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor. A. iv. 625.

⁶ Heu! fuge crudelis terras, fuge litus avarum. A. iii. 44.

rouned Savonarola to seek the things that are above. And this line¹ Dante heard on the lips of the Church Triumphant, at the opening of the Paradise of God. Here, too, are the long roll of prophecies, sought tremblingly in the monk's secret cell, or echoing in the ears of emperors² from Apollo's shrine, which have answered the appeal made by so many an eager heart to the Virgilian Lots—that strange invocation which has been addressed, I believe, to Homer, Virgil, and the Bible alone; the offspring of men's passionate desire to bring to bear on their own lives the wisdom and the beauty which they revered in the past, to make their prophets in such wise as they might—

“Speak from those lips of immemorial speech,
If but one word for each.”

Such references might be multiplied indefinitely. But there is not at any rate need to prove the estimation in which Virgil has been held in the past. The force of that tradition would only be weakened by specification. “The chastest poet,” in Bacon's words, “and royalest, Virgilius Maro, that to the memory of man is known,” has lacked in no age until our own the concordant testimony of the civilised world. No poet has lain so close to so many hearts; no words so often as his have

¹ Manibus date lilia plenis. A. vi. 884.

² Claudius, Hadrian, Severus, etc., “in templo Apollinis Cumani.”

sprung to men's lips in moments of excitement and self-revelation, from the one fierce line retained and chanted by the untameable boy who was to be Emperor of Rome,¹ to the impassioned prophecy of the great English statesman² as he pleaded till morning's light for the freedom of a continent of slaves.

And those who have followed by more secret ways the influence which these utterances have exercised on mankind know well, perhaps themselves have shared, the mass of emotion which has slowly gathered round certain lines of Virgil's as it has round certain texts of the Bible, till they come to us charged with more than an individual passion and with a meaning wider than their own—with the cry of the despair of all generations,³ with the yearning of all loves unappeased,⁴ with the anguish of all partings,⁵ "beneath the pressure of separate eternities."

Perhaps there will be no better way of forming an intimate conception of the poet's own nature than by analysing his treatment of two or three of

¹ Clodius Albinus. *Arma amens capio; nec sat rationis in armis.* A. ii. 314.

² Pitt. G. i. 250.

*Nosque ubi primus equis Oriens adflavit anhelis,
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.*

³ *Quo res summa loco, Panthu? quam prendimus arcem?* A. ii. 322.

⁴ *Illum absens absentem auditque videtque.* A. iv. 83.

⁵ *Quem fugis? extremum fato, quod te adloquor, hoc est.* A. vi. 466.

his principal characters, and especially of his hero, so often considered as forming the weakest element in his poem. Æneas, no doubt, looks at once tame and rigid beside the eager and spontaneous warriors of the Homeric epoch, and, so far as the Æneid is a poem of action and adventure, he is not a stirring or an appropriate hero. But we must not forget that there was a special difficulty in making his character at once consistent and attractive. He is a man who has survived his strongest passion, his deepest sorrow; who has seen his "Ilium settle into flame," and from "Creusa's melancholy shade," and the great ghost of Hector fallen in vain, has heard the words which sum the last disaster and close the tale of Troy. It is no fault of his that he is left alive; and the poem opens with the cry of his regret that he too has not been able to fall dead upon the Trojan plain, "where Hector lies, and huge Sarpedon, and Simois rolls so many warriors' corpses to the sea." But it is not always at a man's crowning moment that his destiny and his duty close; and for those who fain had perished with what they held most dear, fate may reserve a more tedious trial, and the sad triumphs of a life whose sun has set. It is to this note that all the adventures of Æneas respond. We find him when he lands at Carthage at once absorbed in the pictures which show the story of Priam and of his city's fall—

“ What realm of earth, he answered, doth not know,
 O friend, our sad pre-eminence of woe ?
 Tears waken tears, and honour honour brings,
 And mortal hearts are moved by mortal things.”¹

Then he himself tells that tale, with an intensity of pathos too well known to need further allusion. And when his story brings him to calmer scenes—to his meeting with “ Hector’s Andromache ” on the Chaonian shore—those who have loved and lost will recognise in their colloquy the touches that paint the fond illusion of the heart which clings, with a half smile at its own sad persistency, to the very name and semblance of the places by love made dear,² which seeks in the eyes or movements of surviving kindred some glance or gesture of the dead.³ Take one more instance only—the meeting of Æneas with Deiphobus in the underworld—and note how the same cry breaks from him⁴ as that with which he greeted the vision of Hector,⁵—a cry of reverence heightened by compassion—that

¹ Quis jam locus, inquit, Achate,
 Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris ?
 En Priamus ! sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi ;
 Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt. A. i. 459.

² Procedo, et parvam Troiam simulataque magnis
 Pergama et arentem Xanthi cognomine rivum
 Adgnosco, Scaeeaeque amplector limina portae. A. iii. 349.

³ Cape dona extrema tuorum
 O mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago !
 Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat ;
 Et nunc aequali tecum pubesceret aevo. A. iii. 488.

⁴ A. vi. 502.

⁵ A. ii. 285.

mingling of emotions which makes the utmost ardour of worship and of love—a cry of indignation such as rends the generous heart at the sight of an exalted spirit on which vileness and treachery have been allowed to work their will. How delicately does the “*anima cortese Mantovana*” stand revealed in the lofty reverence with which Æneas addresses the maimed Deiphobus,¹ even while he “hardly knows him, as he trembles and strives to hide his ghastly wounds!” How strangely sweet the cadence in which the living friend laments that he could not see that other, as he lay in death,² could only invoke his spirit with a threefold salutation, and rear an empty tomb! In such sad converse Æneas loses the brief time granted for his visit to the underworld, till the Sibyl warns him that it is being spent in vain—

“The night is going, Trojan ; shall it go
Lost in an aimless memory of woe?”³

But he does not part from his murdered friend till he has given the assurance that all that could be done has been done ; that he has paid the uttermost honour and satisfied the unforgetful shade.

Yet once more ; perhaps the deepest note of all is struck when the old love is encountered by a new, and yet both that memory and that fresh joy

¹ Deiphobe armipotens, genus alto a sanguine Tencri. A. vi. 500.

² A. vi. 507.

³ Nox ruit, Aenea, nos flendo ducimus horas. A. vi. 539.

must give place to an over-ruling call. When Dido implores Æneas to remain in Carthage, after the messenger of Jove has bidden him depart, he answers in words whose solemn movement reveals a long-unuttered pain, and shows that neither in Carthage, nor yet in Italy, can his heart expect a home¹—

“Me had the fates allowed my woes to still,—
Take my sad life, and shape it at my will,—
First had I sought my buried home and joy,
Loves unforgotten, and the last of Troy ;—
Ay, Priam’s palace had re-risen then,
A ghost of Ilium for heart-broken men.”

It is thus that the solemn appeal evokes the unlooked-for avowal ; once and for all he makes it known that the memory which to others is growing dim and half-forgotten in the past, is to him ever present and ever guiding, and always and unalterably dear.

No doubt it is probable that Virgil would have been ill able to describe a more buoyant and adventurous hero. No doubt it is true that such a nature as that of Æneas is ill fitted to fill the leading rôle in a poem of action. But granting that we have him here in the wrong place, and should have preferred a character whom the poet could not draw, we yet surely cannot say, when we remember Æneas’ story, that the picture given of him is meaningless or untrue ; we cannot call it unnatural that we

¹ A. iv. 340

should find in all his conduct something predetermined, hieratic, austere ; we cannot wonder if the only occasion on which he rises to passionate excitement is where he implores the Sibyl for pity's sake to bring him to the sight and presence of the soul he holds so dear ;¹ or if, when from that soul in Paradise he has learnt the secrets of the dead, his temper thenceforth is rather that of the Christian saint than of the Pagan warrior, and he becomes the type of those mediæval heroes, those Galahads and Percivals, whose fiercest exploits are performed with a certain remoteness of spirit — who look beyond blood and victory to a concourse of unseen spectators and a sanction that is not of men.

It is, however, on another character that the personal interest of the *Æneid* has been generally felt to turn. The story of Dido has been said to mark the dawn of romance. It is no doubt the case, though how far this is accidental it is hard to say, that the ancients have dealt oftener with the tragedies resulting from the passion of love, than with the delineation of that passion itself. Sappho, in her early world, had written, as it were, the epigraph over love's temple-door in letters of fire. Catullus had caught the laughing glory of Septimius and Acme — of amorous girl and boy ; Lucretius had painted, with all the mastering force of Rome, the pang of passion baffled by its own intensity and

¹ A. vi 117

festering unsated in a heart at war. But once only, perhaps, do we find the joy of love's appearing, the desolation of his flight, sung of before Virgil's days with a majesty and a pathos like his own. No one who has read has forgotten how "once to Ilion's towers there seemed to come the spirit of a windless calm—a gentle darling of wealth, soft dart of answering eyes, love's soul-subduing flower." Few have heard unmoved of the "semblances of mournful dreams" which brought to that deserted husband "an empty joy; for all in vain, when his delight he seemed to see, forth gliding from his arms the vision vanished far, on swift wings following the ways of sleep." In Æschylus, as in Virgil, the story derives its pathos from the severing of happy loves. In Æschylus they are separated by the woman's misdoing; in Virgil by a higher obligation which the man is bidden to fulfil, yet an obligation which the woman bitterly denies, and which we are ourselves half unwilling to allow. Neither of these plots is quite satisfactory. For in the atmosphere of noble poetry we cannot readily endure that love should either be marred by sin or unreconciled with duty; and no cause of lovers' separation is in harmony with our highest mood, unless it be the touch of death, whose power is but a momentary thing, or so high a call of honour as can give to the parting death's promise and not only his pain.

The power with which Dido is drawn is unques-

tionable. Her transitions of feeling, her ardent soliloquies, reveal a dramatic force in Virgil of a very unexpected kind—an insight into the female heart which is seldom gained by the exercise of imagination alone. But when we compare the Fourth *Æneid* with later poems on the same lofty level—with the *Vita Nuova*, for instance, or with *Laodamia*—we feel how far our whole conception of womanhood has advanced since Virgil's day under the influence of Christianity, chivalry, civilisation. A nature like Dido's will now repel as much as it attracts us. For we have learnt that a woman may be childlike as well as impassioned, and soft as well as strong; that she may glow with all love's fire and yet be delicately obedient to the lightest whisper of honour. The most characteristic factor in Dido's story is of a more external kind. It is the contrast between the queen's stately majesty and the subduing power of love which is most effectively used to intensify the dramatic situation. And the picture suggests a few reflections as to the way in which the wealth and magnificence of Roman society affected the poets of the age.

It happens that three great Latin poets, in strikingly similar passages,¹ have drawn the contrast between a simple and a splendid life. Horace, here, as elsewhere, shows himself the ideal poet of society; more cultivated, sensitive, affectionate than the men

¹ Lucr. ii. 24. Virg. G. ii. 468. Hor. Carm. iii. 1, 41.

and women among whom he moves, yet not so far above them or aloof from them but that he can delight, even more keenly than they, in their luxury and splendour — can enjoy it without envy, as he can dispense with it without regret. Lucretius is the aristocrat with a mission; to him the lamp-bearing images, and the blaze of midnight banquets, and the harp that echoes beneath the ceiling's fretted gold—all these are but a vain and bitter jest which cannot drive superstition from the soul, nor kill those fears of death which “mingle unabashed amongst kings and kesars,” awed not at all by golden glitter or by purple sheen. Virgil is the rustic of genius, well educated, of delicately refined nature, wholly free from base admirations or desires, but “reared amid the woods and copses,” and retaining to the last some touch of shyness in the presence of this world's grandeur; ever eager to escape from the palace-halls into his realm of solitude and song. The well-known passage in the *Georgics* depicts, as we may well imagine, in its vein of dignified irony, his own sensations when he mixed with the society which so eagerly sought him at Rome. We have his embarrassment at the crowd of visitors coming and going as he calls on Pollio or Mæcenas at the fashionable hour of 7 A.M.; his ennui as he accompanies over the house a party of virtuosi, open-mouthed at the æsthetic furniture; and even his disgust at the uncomfortable magnificence of his

bedchamber, and at the scented oil which is served to him with his salad at dinner.¹ And what a soaring change when from the stately metrical roll which reflects the pomp and luxury of the imperial city, he mounts without an effort into that airy rush which blends together all "the glory of the divine country," its caverns, and its living lakes, and haunts of wild things in the glade, its "life that never disappoints," its life-long affections, and its faith in God!²

Yet Virgil's familiarity with the statelier life of Rome was not unfruitful. It has given to him in his *Æneid* an added touch of dignity, as of one who has seen face to face such greatness as earth can offer, and paints without misgiving the commerce of potentates and kings. And thus it is that he has filled every scene of Dido's story with a sense of royal scope and unchartered power; as of an existence where all honours are secure already, and all else that is wished for won, only the heart demands an inner sanctuary, and life's magnificence still lacks its crowning joy. First we have the banquet, when love is as yet unacknowledged and unknown, but the "signs of his coming and sounds of his feet"

¹ Si non ingentem foribus domus alta superbis
 Mane salutantum totis vomit aedibus undam,
 Nec varios inhiant pulchra testudine postis,
 Inlusasque auro vestes, Ephyreiaque æra,
 Alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno,
 Nec casia liquidi corrumpitur usus olivi. G. ii. 461.

² G. ii. 473.

have begun to raise all things to an intenser glow ; when the singer's song rises more glorious, and all voices ring more full and free,¹ and ancestral ceremonies are kindled into life by the ungovernable gladness of the soul.² Then comes the secluded colloquy between queen and princess,³ as they discuss the guest who made the night so strange and new ; and then the rush of Dido's gathering passion among the majestic symbols of her sway.⁴

“With him the queen the long ways wanders down,
And shows him Sidon's wealth and Carthage town,
And oft would speak, but as the words begin
Fails her breath caught by mastering Love within ;—
Once more in feast must she the night employ,
Must hear once more her Trojan tell of Troy,
Hang on his kingly voice, and shuddering see
The imagined scenes where every scene is he.
Then guests are gone and night and morn are met,
Far off in heaven the solemn stars have set,—
Thro' the empty halls alone she mourns again,
Lies on the couch where hath her hero lain,
Sees in the dark his kingly face, and hears
His voice imagined in her amorous ears.”

And through all the scenes that follow, the same royal accent runs till the last words that lift our imagination from the tumultuous grief around the dying Dido, to the scarce more terrible tragedy of a great nation's fall.⁵

¹ A. i. 725.

² A. i. 738.

³ A. iv. 10

⁴ A. iv. 74.

⁵ A. iv. 669.

“Not else than thus, when foes have forced a way,
On Tyre or Carthage falls the fatal day ;—
'Mid such wild woe crash down in roaring fire
Temples and towers of Carthage or of Tyre.”

And assuredly the “Deeds of the Roman People,”¹ the title which many men gave to the *Æneid* when it first appeared, would not have been complete without some such chapter as this. The prophecy of Anchises, the shield of Vulcan, record for us the imperial city's early virtue, her world-wide sway ; but it is in this tale of Carthage that the poet has written in a burning parable the passion and the pomp of Rome.

And yet in spite of all the force and splendour with which Dido is described, we feel instinctively that she is not drawn by a lover's hand. We have in her no indication of the poet's own ideal and inward dream. If that is to be sought at all, it must be sought elsewhere. And, perhaps, if the fancy be permitted, we may imagine that we discern it best in the strange and yearning beauty of the passages which speak of the glorious girlhood of Camilla, the maid unwon ; Camilla, whose death a nymph avenges, and whose tale Diana tells ; Camilla, whose name leapt first of all to Virgil's lips as he spoke to Dante of their Italy in the underworld.² Surely there is something more than a mere poetic fervour in the lines which describe the love which lit on

¹ “*Gesta populi Romani*.”

² *Inf. i.* 107.

the girl while yet a child, and followed her till her glorious hour;¹ the silent reverence which watched the footsteps of the maiden "whom so many mothers for their sons desired in vain;"² the breath caught with a wistful wonder, the long and lingering gaze,³ the thrill of admiration which stirs the heart with the very concord of joy and pain. Where has he more subtly mingled majesty with sweetness than in the lines which paint her happy nurture among the woodlands where her father was a banished king? her wild and supple strength enhanced by the contrasting thought of the "flowing gown and golden circlet,"⁴ which might have weighted the free limbs with royal purple or wound among the tresses that were hooded with the tiger's spoil.

Thus much, at least, we may say, that while in poetry the higher and truer forms of love, as distinguished both from friendship and from passion, appear first in the Middle Ages, and in Dante above all, yet passages like these reveal to us the early stirring of conceptions which were hereafter to be so dominant and so sublime—the dawning instinct of

¹ A. xi. 537.

² A. xi. 581. -

³ *Illam omnis tectis agrisque effusa inventus
Turbaque miratur matrum et prospectat euntem,
Attonitis inhians animis, ut regius ostro
Velet honos levis humeros, ut fibula crinem
Auro internectat, Lyciam ut gerat ipsa pharetram
Et pastorem præfixa cuspide myrtum.*—A. vii. 812.

⁴ *Pro crinali auro, pro longæ tegmine pallæ
Tigridis exuviae per dorsum a vertice pendent,* etc.—A. xi. 576.

a worship which should be purer and more pervading than any personal desire—of a reverence which should have power for a season to keep Love himself at bay, and to which a girl's gladness and beauty should become a part "of something far more deeply interfused," and touch the spirit with the same sense of yearning glory which descends on us from the heaven of stars.

To dwell thus on some of the passages in Virgil whose full meaning escapes a hasty perusal, may help us to realise one of his characteristic charms—his power of concentrating the strangeness and fervour of the romantic spirit within the severe and dignified limits of classical art. To this power in great measure we must ascribe his unique position as the only unbroken link between the ancient and the modern world. In literary style and treatment, just as in religious dogma and tendency, there has been something in him which has appealed in turn to ages the most discrepant and the most remote. He has been cited in different centuries as an authority on the worship of river-nymphs and on the incarnation of Christ. And similarly the poems which were accepted as soon as published as the standard of Latin classicality, became afterwards the direct or indirect original of half the Renaissance epics of adventure and love.

We feel, however, that considerations like these leave us still far from any actual realisation of the

means by which the poet managed to produce this singular complex of impressions. In dealing with poetry, as with the kindred arts, criticism almost necessarily ceases to be fruitful or definite at the very point where the interest of the problems becomes the greatest. We must be content with such narrower inquiries as may give us at least a clearer conception of the nature and difficulties of the achievement at which the artist has aimed. We may, for instance, discuss the capabilities of the particular language in which a poet writes, just as we may discuss the kind of effects producible on violin or pianoforte, in water-colour or oil. And any estimate of the Latin, as a literary language, implies at once a comparison with the speech of that people from whose admirable productions Latin literature was avowedly derived.

No words that men can any more set side by side can ever affect the mind again like some of the great passages of Homer. For in them it seems as if all that makes life precious were in the act of being created at once and together—language itself, and the first emotions, and the inconceivable charm of song. When we hear one single sentence of Anticleia's answer,¹ as she begins—

οὐτ' ἔμεγ' ἐν μεγαροῦν ἐὺσκοπος ἰοχέαιρα—

what words can express the sense which we receive

¹ Od. xi. 198.

of an effortless and absolute sublimity, the feeling of morning freshness and elemental power, the delight which is to all other intellectual delights what youth is to all other joys? And what a language! which has written, as it were, of itself those last two words for the poet, which offers them as the fruit of its inmost structure and the bloom of its early day! Beside speech like this Virgil's seems elaborate, and Dante's crabbed, and Shakespeare's barbarous. There never has been, there never will be, a language like the dead Greek. For Greek had all the merits of other tongues without their accompanying defects. It had the monumental weight and brevity of the Latin without its rigid unmanageability; the copiousness and flexibility of the German without its heavy commonness and guttural superfluity; the pellucidity of the French without its jejuneness; the force and reality of the English without its structureless comminution. But it was an instrument beyond the control of any but its creators. When the great days of Greece were past, it was the language which made speeches and wrote books, and not the men. Its French brilliancy taught Isocrates to polish platitude into epigram; its German profundity enabled Lycophron to pass off nonsense as oracles; its Italian flow encouraged Apollonius Rhodius to shroud in long-drawn sweetness the langour of his inventive soul. There was nothing except the language left.

Like the golden brocade in a queen's sepulchre, its imperishable splendour was stretched stiffly across the skeleton of a life and thought which inhabited there no more.

The history of the Latin tongue was widely different. We do not meet it full-grown at the dawn of history; we see it take shape and strength beneath our eyes. We can watch, as it were, each stage in the forging of the thunderbolt; from the day when Ennius, Nævius, Pacuvius inweave their "three shafts of twisted storm,"¹ till Lucretius adds "the sound and terror," and Catullus "the west wind and the fire." It grows with the growth of the Roman people; it wins its words at the sword's point; and the "conquered nations in long array" pay tribute of their thought and speech as surely as of their blood and gold.

In the region of poetry this union of strenuous effort with eager receptivity is conspicuously seen. The barbarous Saturnian lines, hovering between an accentual and a quantitative system, which were the only indigenous poetical product of Latium, rudely indicated the natural tendency of the Latin tongue towards a trochaic rhythm. Contact with Greece introduced Greek metres, and gradually established a definite quantitative system. Quantity and accent are equally congenial to the Latin lan-

¹ Tris imbris torti radios, tris nubis aquosae

Addiderant, rutili tris ignis et alitis Austri. A. viii. 429.

guage, and the trochaic and iambic metres of Greece bore transplantation with little injury. The adaptations of these rhythms by early Roman authors, however uncouth, are at least quite easy and unconstrained; and so soon as the prestige of the Augustan era had passed away, we find both Pagans and Christians expressing in accentual iambic, and especially in accentual trochaic metres, the thoughts and feelings of the new age. Adam of S. Victor is metrically nearer to Livius Andronicus than to Virgil or Ovid; and the Litany of the Arval Brethren finds its true succession, not in the Secular Ode of Horace, but in the *Dies Iræ* or the *Veni Creator*.

For Latin poetry suffered a violent breach of continuity in the introduction from Greece of the hexameter and the elegiac couplet. The quantitative hexameter is in Latin a difficult and unnatural metre. Its prosodial structure excludes a very large proportion of Latin words from being employed at all. It narrowly limits the possible grammatical constructions, the modes of emphasis, the usages of curtailment, the forms of narration. On the other hand, when successfully managed its advantages are great. All the strength and pregnancy of Latin expression are brought out by the stately march of a metre perhaps the most compact and majestic which has ever been invented. The words take their place like the organs in a living structure—

close packed but delicately adjusted and mutually supporting. And the very sense of difficulty overcome gives an additional charm to the sonorous beauty of the dactylic movement, its self-retarding pauses, its onward and overwhelming flow.

To the Greek the most elaborate poetical effects were as easy as the simplest. In his poetic, as in his glyptic art, he found all materials ready to his hand; he had but to choose between the marble and the sardonix, between the ivory and the gold. The Roman hewed his conceptions out of the granite rock; oftenest its craggy forms were rudely piled together, yet dignified and strong; but there were hands which could give it finish too, which could commit to the centuries a work splendid as well as imperishable, polished into the basalt's shimmer and fervent with the porphyry's glow.

It must not, however, be supposed that even the *Æneid* has wholly overcome the difficulties inseparable from the Latin poetry of the classical age, that it is entirely free either from the frigidities of an imitation or from the constraints of a *tour de force*. In the first place, Virgil has not escaped the injury which has been done to subsequent poets by the example of the length and the subject-matter of Homer. An artificial dignity has been attached to poems in twelve or twenty-four books, and authors have been incited to tell needlessly long stories in order to take rank as epic poets. And because

Homer is full of tales of personal combat—in his day an exciting and all-important thing—later poets have thought it necessary to introduce a large element of this kind of description, which, so soon as it loses reality, becomes not only frigid but disgusting. It is as if the first novel had been written by a schoolboy of genius, and all succeeding novelists had felt bound to construct their plots mainly of matches at football. It is the later books of the *Æneid* that are most marred by this mistake. In the earlier books there are, no doubt, some ill-judged adaptations of Homeric incident,¹ some laboured reproductions of Homeric formulæ, but for the most part the events are really noble and pathetic,—are such as possess permanent interest for civilised men. The three last books, on the other hand, which have come down to us in a crude and unpruned condition, contain large tracts immediately imitated from Homer, and almost devoid of independent value.²

Besides these defects in matter, the latter part of the poem illustrates the metrical dangers to which Latin hexameters succumbed almost as soon as Virgil was gone. The types on which they could be composed were limited in number and were becoming exhausted. Many of the lines in

¹ See especially A. v. 263-5.

² The following passages might perhaps be omitted *en bloc* with little injury to Virgil's reputation :—A. x. 276-762 : xi. 597-648, 868-908 ; xii. 266-311, 529-592.

the later books are modelled upon lines in the earlier ones. Many passages show that peculiar form of bald artificiality into which this difficult metre so readily sinks; nay, some of the *tibicines*, or stop-gaps, suggest a grotesque resemblance to the well-known style of the fourth-form boy.¹ Other more ambitious passages give the painful impression of just missing the effect at which they aim.²

We should, however, be much mistaken if we inferred that this accidental want of finish—due to the poet's premature death—indicated any decline of power. On the contrary, nothing, perhaps, in Latin versification is more interesting than the traces of a later manner in process of formation, which are to be found in the concluding books of the *Æneid*. The later manner of a painter or poet generally differs from his earlier manner in much the same way. We observe in him a certain impatience of the rules which have guided him to excellence, a certain desire to use materials more freely, to obtain bolder and newer effects. A tendency of this kind may be discerned in the versification of the later books, especially of the twelfth book, of the *Æneid*. The innovations are individually hardly perceptible, but taken together they alter the character of the hexameter line in a way more easily felt than described. Among the more definite changes we may note that there are

¹ *e.g.* A. x. 526-9, 584-5.

² *e.g.* A. x. 468-471, 557-560.

more full stops in the middle of lines, there are more elisions, there is a larger proportion of short words, there are more words repeated, more assonances, and a freer use of the emphasis gained by the recurrence of verbs in the same or cognate tenses. Where passages thus characterised have come down to us still in the making, the effect is forced and fragmentary.¹ Where they succeed they combine, as it seems to me, in a novel manner the rushing freedom of the old trochaics with the majesty which is the distinguishing feature of Virgil's style.² Art has concealed its art, and the poet's last words suggest to us possibilities in the Latin tongue which no successor has been able to realise.

It is difficult to dwell long on such technical points as these without appearing arbitrary or pedantic. The important thing is to understand how deliberate, forceful, weighty, Virgil's diction is ; what a mass of thought and feeling was needed to give to the elaborate structure of the Latin hexameter any convincing power ; how markedly all those indications by which we instinctively judge the truth or the insincerity of an author's emotion are intensified by a form of composition in which "the style," not only of every paragraph but of every clause, is

¹ *e.g.* A. x. 597-600.

² *e.g.* A. xii. 48, 72, 179, 429, 615-6, 632-649, 676-680, 889-893, 903-4.

necessarily and indeed "the man." And when we have learned by long familiarity to read between the lines, to apportion the emphasis, to reproduce, it may be, in imagination some shadow of that "marvellous witchery"¹ with which, as tradition tells us, Virgil's own reading of his poems brought out their beauty, we shall be surprised at the amount of self-revelation discernible beneath the calm of his impersonal song. And here again we shall receive the same impression which remained with us from the examination of the hero who is thought to be in some measure the unconscious portrait of the poet himself—we shall wonder most of all at the abiding sadness of his soul.

We might have thought to find him like the steersman Palinurus, in the scene from which our great English painter has taken the cadence which is to tell of an infinite repose,² communing untroubled with some heaven-descended dream, and keeping through the night's tranquillity his eyes still fixed upon the stars. How is it that he appears to us so often, like the same Palinurus, plunged in a solitary gulf of death, while the ship of human destinies drifts away unguided—*trostlos auf weitem Meer?* How knew he that gathering horror of midnight which presages some unspeakable ruin and the end of all?³ Why was it left for him, above all men, to tell of the anguish of irredeemable bereavement, and Eurydice's

¹ "Lenociniis miris."

² Turner's *Datur Hora Quietis*. A. v. 844.

³ A. iv. 460-4

appealing hands as she vanished backwards into the night? ¹ What taught him the passion of those lines whose marvellous versification seems to beat with the very pulses of the heart,² where the one soul calls upon the other in the many-peopled fields of death, and asks of all that company, "not less nor more, but even that word alone"? What is it that has given such a mystical intensity to every glimpse which he opens of the eternity of the impassioned soul?—where sometimes the wild pathetic rhythm alone suggests an undefinable regret,³ or a single epithet will renew a world of mourning, and disclose a sorrow unassuageable in Paradise itself.⁴ Or, for one moment, Sychaeus' generous shade, appealed to in such varying accents as the storms of passion rose or fell, deemed sometimes forgetful and distant and unregarding in the grave, is seen at last in very presence and faithful to the vows of earth, filled with a love which has forgiven inconstancy as it has outlasted death.⁵

These short and pregnant passages will appeal to different minds with very different power. There are some whose emotion demands a fuller expression than this, a more copious and ready flow—who choose rather, like Shelley, to pour the whole free nature into a sudden and untrammelled lay. But there are others who have learnt to recognise the last height

¹ G. iv. 498.² A. vi. 670.³ A. vi. 447.⁴ A. vi. 480.⁵ A. vi. 474.

of heroism, the last depth of tenderness, rather in a word than in a protest, and rather in a look than in a word; to whom all strong feeling comes as a purging fire, a disengagement from the labyrinth of things; whose passion takes a more concentrated dignity as it turns inwards and to the deep of the heart. And such men will recognise in Virgil a precursor, a master, and a friend; they will call him the *Magnanimo*, the *Verace Duca*; they will enrol themselves with eager loyalty among the spiritual progeny of a spirit so melancholy, august, and alone.

And some, too, there will always be to whom some touch of poetic gift has revealed the delight of self-expression, while yet their infertile instinct of melody has failed them at their need, and their scanty utterance has rather mocked than assuaged for them the incommunicable passion of the soul. Such men will be apt to think that not only would an added sanctity have been given to all sacred sorrow, an added glory to all unselfish joy, but that this earth's less ennobling emotions as well—the sting of unjust suspicions,¹ and the proud resentment of stealthy injuries,² and the bewilderment of life's unguided way³—even these would have been transmuted into spiritual strength if they could in such manner have shaped themselves into song; as the noise of bear, and wolf, and angered lion came to the Trojans with a majesty that had no touch of fear or

¹ A. i. 529.² A. vi. 502.³ A. xii. 917.

pain, as they heard them across the midnight waters, mixed with the music of Circe's echoing isle.¹

How was it, then, with the poet himself, to whom it was given to "sweep in ever-highering eagle-circles up" till his words became the very term and limit of human utterance in song? *Quin Decios Drususque procul*;—when he was summing up in those lines like bars of gold the hero-roll of the Eternal City, conferring with every word an immortality, and, like his own Æneas, bearing on his shoulders the fortune and the fame of Rome, did he feel in that great hour that he had done all that man can do? All that we know is, that he spoke of his attempt to write the Æneid as "an act almost of insanity," and that on his deathbed he urgently begged his friends to burn the unfinished poem.

"O dignitosa coscienza e netta,
Come t'è picciol fallo amaro morso!"

Yet we feel that Virgil's character would not have stood out complete to us without the record of that last desire. It was the culminating expression of a lifelong temper—of that yearning after perfection which can never rest satisfied with the things of earth—which carries always with it, as Plato would say, the haunting reminiscence of that perfect beauty on which the soul has looked aforetime in the true, which is the ideal world. And the very stillness

¹ A. vii. 10.

and dignity of Virgil's outward existence help to make him to us an unmixed example of this mood of mind. There is no trace in him of egoistic passion, of tumult, of vanity, or of any jealous or eager love; all his emotions seem to have fused or melted into that *Welt-Schmerz*—that impersonal and indefinable melancholy, the sound of which since his day has grown so familiar in our ears, which invades the sanest and the strongest spirits, and seems to yield to nothing except such a love, or such a faith, as can give or promise heaven. The so-called "modern air" in Virgil's poems is in great measure the result of the constantly-felt pressure of this obscure homesickness—this infinite desire; finding vent sometimes in such appeals as forestall the sighs of Christian saints in the passion of high hopes half withdrawn, when the Divinity is shrouded and afar¹—oftener perceptible only in that accent of brooding sorrow which mourns over the fate of men, and breathes a pathetic murmur into Nature's peace,² and touches with a mysterious forlornness the felicity of the underworld.³

It is the same mood which "*intenerisce il cuore*" in Dante's song, which looks from the unsatisfied eyes of Michael Angelo and of Tintoret,—a mood commoner, indeed, among the nations of the North,

¹ *e.g.* G. iv. 324-5. A. i. 407.

² *Te nemus Anguitiae, vitrea te Fucinus unda,
Te liquidi flevire lacus.* A. vii. 760.

³ *Solemque suum, sua sidera nôrunt.* A. vi. 641.

but felt at times by Italians who have had the power to see that all the glory round them does but add a more mysterious awfulness to the insoluble riddle of the world.

Nor is any region of Italy a fitter temple for such thoughts than the Bay of Naples, which virtually was Virgil's home. For it was not Mantua, but "sweet Parthenope," which fostered his years of silent toil; his wanderings were on that southern shore where the intense and azure scene seems to carry an unknown sadness in the convergence of heaven and sea, and something of an unearthly expectancy in the still magnificence of its glow. It was there that inwardly he bled and was comforted, inwardly he suffered and was strong; it was there that what others learn in tempest he learnt in calm, and became in ardent solitude the very voice and heart of Rome.

II.

The century which elapsed between the publication of the Fourth Eclogue and of the Epistle to the Romans witnessed an immense expansion of the human mind. So far as we can attach definite dates to the gradual growth of world-wide conceptions, we may say that in this century arose the ideas of the civil and of the religious unity of all families of men. These ideas, at first apparently hostile to one another, and associated, the one with the military supremacy

of Rome, the other with the spiritual supremacy of Jerusalem, gradually coalesced into the notion of a Holy Roman Empire, involving, as that notion does in the mind, for instance, of Dante, the concentration of both spiritual and temporal power in the Eternal City. Again the conceptions have widened; and we now imagine a brotherhood of mankind, a universal Church, without localised empire or a visible viceroy of heaven.

Throughout all the phases which these great generalisations have traversed, the authority of Virgil has been freely invoked. And when we turn from the personal to the public aspect of his poems, we are at once obliged to discuss in what sense he may be considered as the earliest and the official exponent of the world-wide Empire of Rome, the last and the closest precursor of the world-wide commonwealth of Christ. The unanimous acceptance of Virgil in his lifetime—while the *Æneid* was yet unwritten—as the unique poetical representative of the Roman State is a fact quite as surprising and significant as the ready acceptance of Augustus as its single ruler. It is not, indeed, strange that a few short but lovely pieces, such as the *Eclogues*, should have delighted literary circles and suggested to Mæcenas that this young poet's voice would be the fittest to preach the revival of antique simplicity and rural toil. The astonishing thing is the success of the *Georgics*, the fact that an agricultural poem not twice as long as

Comus should at once have procured for its author a reputation to which the literary history of the world affords no parallel. Petrarch was crowned on the Capitol amid the applause of the literati of Europe. Voltaire was "smothered with roses" in the crowded theatres of the Paris of his old age. But the triumph of Petrarch was the manifesto of a humanistic clique. The triumph of Voltaire was the first thunderclap of a political storm. When, on the other hand, the Romans rose to their feet in the theatre on the casual quotation of some words of Virgil's on the stage—when they saluted the poet as he entered the house with the same marks of reverence which they paid to Augustus Cæsar—it was plain that some cause was at work which was not of a partisan, which was not even of a purely literary character. Perhaps it was that the minds of men were agitated by the belief that a new era was impending, that "the great order of the ages was being born anew," and in the majestic and catholic tranquillity of Virgil's song they recognised instinctively the temper of an epoch no longer of struggle but of supremacy, the first-fruits of Imperial Rome. We must at least attribute some such view to the cultivated classes of the time. That the sublime poem of Lucretius should obtain only a cold *succès d'estime*, while the *Georgics*, a more exquisite work, no doubt, but a work of so much smaller range, should be hailed as raising its author to an equality with Homer, is a disproportion too great to

be accounted for by a mere literary preference. It was a deep-seated recognition of the truly national character of Virgil's work, of his unique fitness to reflect completely all the greatness of the advancing time, which led even rival poets to predict so strenuously that the *Æneid*, of which no one had as yet seen a paragraph, would be co-eternal with the dominion of Rome. Stranger still it is to see how tragically the event surpassed the prophecy. "Light among the vanished ages," we may exclaim with no exaggeration, in Lord Tennyson's words—

"Star that gildest yet this phantom shore!
Golden branch amid the shadows, kings and realms that
set to rise no more!"

When we look at the intellectual state of Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries, our complaint is not that Virgil is forgotten, but that nothing else is remembered; that the last achievement of the "togawearing race" is to extemporise centos from the *Æneid* on any given theme; that the last heads seen to rise above the flood of advancing barbarism should be those of grammarians calling themselves Menalcas and parsing *Tityre*, or calling themselves Virgilius and parsing *Arma virum*.

There is something, too, of Fate's solemn irony in the way in which, as the ancient world is re-discovered, the first words borne back to us by the muffled voice of ruin or catacomb are scattered

fragments of that poem which was the last on Rome's living lips. There is something tragic in finding Virgil's line, "So great a work it was to found the race of Rome," cut in colossal characters on the monstrous ruins of the baths of Titus; Virgil's words, "Then all were silent," look strangely in a half-finished scrawl from a wall of Pompeii's hushed and solitary homes.¹ But the long tradition, as has been already said, has not continued unbroken to our own day. There have of late been many critics who have denied that the *Æneid* is adequately representative of the Roman commonwealth, who have been struck with the unqualified support, the absolute deification bestowed on Augustus, and have urged that the laureate who indulged in so gratuitous an adulation must be styled a court, and not a national poet.

So far as Virgil's mere support of Augustus goes, this objection, however natural to the lovers of free government, will hardly stand the test of historical inquiry. For Virgil had not to choose between Augustus and the Republic, but between Augustus and Antony. The Republic was gone for ever; and not Hannibal himself, we may surely say, was a more dangerous foe than Antony to the Roman people. No battle which that people ever fought was more thoroughly national, more decisively important, than the battle of Actium. The

¹ CONTICVEREOM.

name of Actium, indeed, can never waken the glory and the joy which spring to the heart at the name of Salamis. Not "Leucate's promontory afire with embattled armaments," not "Actian Apollo bending from above his bow" can stir the soul like that one trump,¹ that morning onset, that "small ill-harbour'd islet, oft-haunted of dance-loving Pan."² But the essence of each battle was in fact the same. Whether it were against the hosts of Susa and Ecbatana, or against "the dog Anubis" and the Egyptian queen, each battle was the triumph of Western discipline, religion, virtue, over the tide of sensuality and superstition which swept onwards from the unfathomable East.

And thus we come to the point where Virgil is, in reality, closely identified with the policy of the Augustan *régime*. Augustus was not himself a moral hero. But partly fortune, partly wisdom, partly a certain innate preference for order and reverence for the gods, had rendered him the only available representative, not only of the constitution and the history, but of the morals and religion of Rome. The leading pre-occupation of his official life was the restoration of national virtue. It is hard to trace the success or failure of an attempt like this among a complex society's conflicting currents of good and evil. Yet it seems that to his strenuous insistence on all of morality which

¹ Aesch. Pers. 395.

² Psytalea. Pers. 447.

legislation can achieve, we may in some measure ascribe that moonlight of Roman virtue which mingles so long its chastened gentleness with the blaze of the Empire's lurid splendour, the smoke of its foul decay. A reform like this, however, cannot be achieved by a single ruler. And sincere co-operation was hard to find. Papius and Poppæus might pass laws against celibacy. But Papius and Poppæus themselves (as Boissier reminds us) remained obstinately unmarried. Horace might sing of praying to the gods "with our wives and children." But no one was ever less than Horace of a church-goer or a family man. Virgil, on the other hand, was one of those men whose adherence seems to give reality to any project of ethical reform. The candid and serious poet, "than whom," as Horace says, "earth bore no whiter soul," was quickly recognised by Mæcenas as the one writer who could with sincerity sound the praises of antique and ingenuous virtue. The *Georgics* came to the Roman world somewhat as the writings of Rousseau came to the French; they might have little apparent influence upon conduct, but they made a new element in the mind of the age, they testified at least to the continued life of pure ideas, to the undying conception of a contented labour, of an unbought and guileless joy.

But this was not yet enough. The spirit of Roman virtue needed to be evoked by a sterner spell. In

the Georgics the land of Italy had for the first time been impressively presented as a living and organic whole. And the idea of Italy's lovely primacy among all other countries was destined to subsist and grow. But it was not yet towards the name of Italy that the enthusiasm of Virgil's fellow-citizens most readily went out. However variously expressed or shrouded, the religion of the Romans was Rome. The destiny of the Eternal City is without doubt the conception which, throughout the long roll of human history, has come nearest to the unchangeable and the divine. It is an idea majestic enough to inspire worship, and to be the guide of life and death. This religion of Rome, in its strictest sense, has formed no trifling factor in the story of the Christian Church. It appears in its strongest and most unquestioning form in the *De Monarchia* of Dante. It formed a vital part of the creed of the great Italian who in our own century has risen to closest communion in thought and deed with the heroes of his country's past. But nowhere, from Ennius to Mazzini, has this faith found such expression as in Virgil's *Æneid*. All is there. There is nothing lacking of noble reminiscence, of high exhortation, of inspiring prophecy. Roman virtue is appealed to through the channel by which alone it could be reached and could be restored; it is renewed by majestic memories and stimulated by an endless hope. The Georgics had been the psalm

of Italy, the *Æneid* was the sacred book of the Religion of Rome.

It appears, then, that although Virgil doubtless lent all his weight to the personal government of Augustus, he neither chose that government in preference to any attainable form of stable freedom, nor co-operated with it in an unfitting manner, nor with an unworthy aim. There remains the question of the deification of Augustus—of the impulse given by Virgil to that worship of the emperors which ultimately became so degrading and so cruel a farce. And here, no doubt, in one passage at least, Virgil's language is such as modern taste must condemn. The frigid mythology with which the first *Georgic* opens is absolutely bad. It is bad as Callimachus is bad, and as every other imitation of Callimachus in Latin literature is bad too. It has, indeed, little meaning; and what meaning it has would need an astrologer to decipher. What are we to make of Tethys and of Proserpine, of Thule and of Elysium, or of the Scorpion who is willing to draw in his claws to make room for Augustus in heaven? It has, indeed, been ingeniously suggested that the true point of this strange passage may consist in a veiled but emphatic warning to Augustus not to assume the title of King,¹ (a title of which, as in Caligula's case, the Romans were far more chary than of the less practical ascription of god-

¹ G. i. 36-7. The suggestion is Mr. Raper's.

head); and, moreover, that the poet himself subsequently apologises¹ for the unreality of the flattering exordium in which this lesson is concealed. Still, we must regret that any passage in Virgil should require such apology. We cannot help seeing more dignity in the tone of Lucretius, whose only feeling with regard to earthly potentates was vexation at their being too busy to allow him to explain his philosophy to them as fully as he could have wished.²

The passages in the *Æneid* in which Augustus is prospectively deified stand on a different footing. In them he is more or less closely identified with Rome herself; he is represented as we see him in the great allegorical statue of the Vatican,—"Augustus Cæsar leading the Italians on to war, with the Senate and the people and the tutelary gods of Rome,"³ the creation of that early moment in the empire's history when it seemed as if the conflicting currents of the Commonwealth might run at length in a single channel, and the State be symbolised not unworthily in the man whom she had chosen as her chief. And, indeed, when we consider the proportions which the worship of "Rome and the genius of Augustus" gradually assumed, the earnestness with which it was pressed on by the people in face of what seems to have been the genuine disapproval of the cautious Emperor,

¹ G. ii. 45-6.

² Lucr. i. 43.

³ A. viii. 678.

the speed with which it became, without formal change or definite installation, the practical religion of the Roman world,¹ we shall see reason to suppose that this strange form of worship, to which Virgil gave perhaps the earliest, though in part an unconscious expression, was not the birth of a merely meaningless servility, but represented what was in fact a religious reform and a return to the oldest instincts of the Roman people.

The Roman religion, as we first hear of it, shows us an Aryan tradition already strongly modified by the Roman character, by a tone of mind abstract and juristic, rather than creative or joyous. Some of the natural powers whose worship the earliest Romans, in common with the earliest Greeks, had inherited from their Aryan ancestors had already acquired a definite quasi-human personality. These the Roman necessarily accepted as persons, though he added no fresh vividness to the conception of them. But his feeble instinct of anthropomorphism hardly went farther than this; and such deities as he himself created,—such tutelary powers, I should rather say, as he thought might be useful if they

¹ See M. Boissier's *Religion Romaine* on all this subject, and especially for an account of the colleges of Augustales, which were the earliest trade-guilds, the earliest representative bodies, the model followed in Christian ecclesiastical organisation, and the first religious bodies on a large scale which admitted all men, without distinction of wealth or birth, to a full share in their privileges and in their control.

happened to exist,—were individualised in the most shadowy manner. They were little more than the sublimated counterparts or correspondences of acts or beings visible here on earth. These deified abstractions were of very various magnitude and dignity, ranging from Minerva, Goddess of Memory, and Janus, God of Opening, down to the crowd of divinities little heard of outside the *Indigitamenta* or handy-book of the Gods, the Goddess of Going Out and the Goddess of Coming In, the God of Silver Money and his father the God of Copper Money, and the God of Speaking Intelligibly, who never made more than a single remark.¹ As the Romans came into contact with other nations, especially with Greece, foreign deities were introduced; but these were identified as far as possible with the Roman deities of similar functions, and did not overthrow the balance of the old *régime*. But as the strange Eastern gods, with their gloomy or frenzied worships, were added to the list this quiet absorption was no longer possible. The Roman Olympus came to resemble a shifting and turbulent Convention, in which now one and now another member,—Dionysus, Isis, Cybele,—rises tumultuously into predominance, and is in turn eclipsed by some newer arrival. This inroad of furious and conflicting superstitions had begun in Virgil's time, and the battle of Actium is for him the defeat of

¹ Iterduca, Domiduca, Argentinus, Æsculanus, Aius Locutius.

the "monstrous forms of gods of every birth,"¹ who would have made their entry with Antony into Rome. At the same time it was hard to suggest an effective antidote for these degrading worships. The gods, so to speak, of the middle period—Jupiter and Juno and the like, with a Greek personality super-added to their more abstract significance—had not vitality enough to expel the intruders from their domain. It was necessary to fall back upon a more thoroughly national and primitive conception, and to deify once more the abstraction of the one earthly existence whose greatness was overwhelmingly evident—the power of Rome. The "Fortune of the City," or *Roma* herself enthroned with the insignia of a Goddess, was the only queen who could overrule at once the epidemic fanaticisms of Rome and the localised cults of the provinces, and be the veritable mistress of heaven.

Nor was even she enough. Through the abstractions of the old Roman religion there had always run a thread of more intimate and personal worship. Not only had each action and each object its spiritual counterpart, but each man as well. The nature of these Lares was somewhat vaguely and obscurely conceived, but the dominant idea seems to have been that they acted as the tutelary genii of men during life, and after death became identical with their immortal part. The Roman worship of an-

¹ A. viii. 698.

cestors was indeed of a different kind from the hero-worship of the Greeks. It dwelt less on the idea of superhuman help than on the idea of family continuity. The Romans had not the faith which bade the Locrians leave a place always open in their battle-ranks for the Oilean Ajax to fill unseen; but they testified by daily offering and daily prayer to their conviction of an immanent and familiar presence which turned the home itself into a never-vacant shrine. They asked no oracle from "Amphiaraus beneath the earth;" but the images of his curule ancestors gathered round about the dead Fabius in the market-place, and welcomed him in silence as he joined the majority of his kin. It is this spirit of piety which the plot of the *Æneid* is designed to illustrate and to foster. *Æneas* has no wish to conquer Latium. He enters it merely because he is divinely instructed that it is in Italy, the original home of his race, that he must continue the worship of his own progenitor *Assaracus* and of the tutelary gods of Troy. This point achieved he asks for nothing more. He introduces the worship of *Assaracus*; but, it must be added, *Assaracus* is never heard of again. So remote and legendary a personage could not become the binding link of the Roman people. Nor had the Roman commonwealth ever yet stood in such a relation to any single family as to permit the identification of their private *Lares* with the *Lares Præstites* of the city of Rome. But

the case was altered now. One family had risen to an isolated pre-eminence which no Roman had attained before. And by a singular chance this same family combined a legendary with an actual primacy. Augustus was at once the representative of Assaracus and the master of the Roman world. The Lares of Augustus were at once identical in a certain sense with Augustus himself, and with the public Penates worshipped immemorially in their chapel in the heart of the city. And if, as is no doubt the case, the worship of Roma and the Lares augusti could claim in Virgil its half-unconscious prophet, we may reply that this worship, however afterwards debased, was in its origin and essence neither novel nor servile, but national and antique; and that until the rise of Christianity, towards which Virgil stands in a yet more singular anticipatory relation, it would have been hard to say what other form of religion could at once have satisfied the ancient instincts and bound together the remote extremities of the Roman world.

The relation of Virgil to Christianity, to which we now come, is an unexpectedly complex matter. To understand it clearly, we must attempt to disentangle some of the threads of religious emotion and belief which intertwine in varying proportions throughout his successive poems.

"Reared among the woods and thickets," an Italian country child, the counterpart of Words-

worth in the union of spiritual aspiration with rustic simplicity in which his early years were spent, Virgil, like Wordsworth, seemed singled out as the poet and priest of nature. And directly imitated as his Eclogues are from Theocritus, a closer investigation reveals the essential differences between the nature of the two poets. The idylls of Theocritus are glowing descriptions of pastoral life, written by a man who lives and enjoys that life, and cares for no other ideal. The Eclogues of Virgil have less of consistency, but they have more of purpose. They are an advocacy, none the less impassioned because indirect, of the charm of scenery and simple pleasures addressed to a society leading a life as remote from nature as the life of the French court in the days of Rousseau. Theocritus, delighting in everything connected with rural life, loves to paint with vigour even its least dignified scenes. Virgil—whom the Neapolitans called the Maid, and who shrank aside when any one looked at him—is grotesquely artificial when he attempts to render the coarse *badinage* of country clowns. On the other hand, where the emotion in Theocritus is pure and worthy, Virgil is found at his side, with so delicate a reproduction of his effects, that it is sometimes hard to say whether the Greek or the Latin passage seems the more spontaneous and exquisite.¹ And there is a whole region of higher emotions in which the Latin poet is

¹ Compare E. viii. 37, with Theocr. xi. 25.

alone. All Virgil's own are those sudden touches of exalted friendship,¹ of exquisite tenderness,² of the sadness and the mystery of love,³ which seem to murmur amid the bright flow of his pastoral poetry of the deep source from whence it springs, as his own Eridanus had his fountain in Paradise and the underworld.⁴ All Virgil's own, too, is the comprehending vision, the inward eye which looks back through all man's wars and tumult to the new-created mountains⁵ and the primal spring,⁶ and that "wise passiveness" to which nature loves to offer her consolation, which fills so often the interspace between faiths decayed and faiths re-risen with a

¹ *e.g.* E. vi. 64. The whole of the tenth eclogue is an exquisite example of the half-tender, half-sportive sympathy by which one friend can best strengthen another in the heart's lesser troubles, and the blank when light loves have flown. The delicate humour of this eclogue has perplexed the German commentators, who suggest (1) either that Virgil meant it as a parody on the fifth eclogue, or (2) that Gallus was in fact dead when it was written, and that the poem,—ostensibly composed to console him for being jilted by an actress,—was, in reality, intended as a sort of funeral psalm. I may notice here the improbability of the story that Virgil altered the end of the Fourth Georgic, omitting a panegyric on Gallus after Gallus' disgrace and death. The Georgics were published B.C. 29, and Gallus died B.C. 26. It is hard to believe that a long passage, constituting the conclusion and crown of the most popular and best known poem that had ever appeared in Rome, and deriving added interest from the political scandal involved, should, after being three years before the public, have perished so utterly that not a line, not a fragment of a line, not an allusion to the passage, should anywhere remain.

² *e.g.* E. iv. 60. ³ *e.g.* E. viii. 47. ⁴ A. vi. 658.

⁵ E. vi. 40.

⁶ G. ii. 338.

tranquillised abeyance of doubt and fear. "Pan and old Silvanus and the sister nymphs;" Silenus keeping the shepherds spell-bound till twilight with his cosmic song; Proteus uttering his unwilling oracles upon the solitary shore; Clymene singing of love in the caverned water-world amid the rivers' roaring flow;—what are all these but aspects and images of that great mother who has for all her children a message which sometimes seems only the sweeter because its meaning can be so dimly known?

Peculiar to Virgil, too, is that tone of expectation which recurs again and again to the hope of some approaching union of mankind beneath a juster heaven, which bids the shepherd look no longer on the old stars with worn-out promises, but on a star new-risen and more benign; which tells in that mystical poem to which scholars know no key, how the pure and stainless shepherd dies and is raised to heaven, and begins from thence a gentle sway which forbids alike the wild beast's ravin and the hunter's cruel guile.¹

"O great good news thro' all the woods that ran!
O psalm and praise of shepherds and of Pan!
The hills unshorn to heaven their voices fling;
Desert and wilderness rejoice and sing;
'A god he is! a god we guessed him then!
Peace on the earth he sends and joy to men.'"

¹ E. v. 58.

But it is, of course, the Fourth, or Messianic Eclogue (known to the English reader in Pope's paraphrase, *Ye nymphs of Solyma, begin the song*), which has formed the principal point of union between Virgil and the new faith. In every age of Christianity, from Augustine to Abelard, from the Christmas sermon of Pope Innocent III. to the *Prælectiones Academicæ* of the late Mr. Keble, divines and fathers of the Church have asserted the inspiration, and claimed the prophecies of this marvellous poem. It was on the strength of this poem that Virgil's likeness was set among the carven seers in the Cathedral of Zamora. It was on the strength of this poem that in the Cathedrals of Limoges and Rheims the Christmas appeal was made: "O Maro, prophet of the Gentiles, bear thou thy witness unto Christ;" and the stately semblance of the Roman gave answer in the words which tell how "the new progeny has descended from heaven on high." The prophecy can claim œcumenical acceptance, regenerative efficacy. The poet Statius, the martyr Secundianus, were said to have been made Christians by its perusal. And at the supreme moment of the transference and reconstruction of the civil and spiritual authority of the earth, the Emperor Constantine in his oration, "inscribed to the Assembly of Saints and dedicated to the Church of God," commented on this poem in a Greek version, as forming a link between the old and the new faiths,

as explaining the change of form, and justifying the historical continuity, of the religion of the civilised world.

And there is nothing in this which need either surprise or shock us.¹ For, in reality, the link between Virgil and Christianity depended not on a

¹ There is, no doubt, a startling antithesis between the real and the supposed object of Virgil's prophecy. For there can surely be little doubt (as Bishop Louth, Boissier, etc., have argued) that the Fourth Eclogue was written in anticipation of the birth of the child of Augustus (then Octavianus) and Scribonia—the notorious Julia, born B.C. 39, shortly after the peace of Brundisium. The words “te consule” applied to Pollio make it most unlikely that he was the child's *father*. On the other hand, it would have been quite in keeping with Virgil's stately courtesy to address to Pollio, Antony's representative and Virgil's friend, a congratulatory poem on the birth in his consulship of a child to Augustus, with whom Antony had just been reconciled. Virgil was from the first one of the most ardent supporters of Augustus, and though the young heir of Cæsar was not as yet clearly the first man in Rome, still, the prestige of the Julian family alone could make the expressions of the poem seem other than extravagant. Virgil no doubt desired to associate Pollio as closely as possible with the hopes of the Roman commonwealth. But to speak of “a world at peace through Pollio's virtue” would have been no less than absurd. Moreover, the phrase, “thy Apollo is in the ascendant now,” points clearly to Augustus, whose patron Apollo was. The reason why the riddle was not explained is obvious. The expected child turned out to be a girl—and a girl who perhaps gave rise to more scandal than any other member of her sex. It is singular that the embarrassing failure of the prediction at the time has been the source of its extraordinary reputation afterwards, when the horoscope composed for Julia was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Like the arrow of Aëetes (A. v. 520), the prophecy seemed to consume away in the clouds and burn itself into empty air—

“Till days far off its mighty meaning knew,
And seers long after sang the presage true.”

misapplied prediction but on a moral sequence, a spiritual conformity. There was a time when both the apologists and the adversaries of Christianity were disposed to ignore its connection with preceding faiths. Exaggerated pictures of its miraculous diffusion were met by the sneers of Gibbon at the contagious spread of superstitions among the ruins of a wiser world. The tone of both parties has altered as historical criticism has advanced. It is recognised that it is only "in the fulness of time" that a great religious change can come; that men's minds must be prepared for new convictions by a need which has been deeply felt, and a habit of thought which has been slowly acquired. And in Virgil's time, as has already been said, the old dogmas were tending to disappear. But while in the lower minds they were corrupting into superstition, in the higher they were evaporating into a clearer air. The spiritual element was beginning to assert itself over the ceremonial. Instincts of catholic charity were beginning to put to shame the tribal narrowness of the older faith. Philosophy was issuing from the lecture-room into the forum and the street.

And thus it is that Virgil's poems lie at the watershed of religions. Filled as they are with Roman rites and Roman tradition, they contain also another element, gentler, holier, till then almost unknown; a change has passed over them like the

change which passes over a Norwegian midnight when the rose of evening becomes silently the rose of dawn.

It is strange to trace the alternate attraction and repulsion which the early Christians felt towards Virgil. Sometimes they allegorised the *Æneid* into a kind of Siege of Man-soul, in which the fall, the temptations, the deliverance of man, are recorded in a figure. Sometimes they compiled Christianised centos from his poems,—works which obtained such authority that Pope Gelasius found it necessary to pronounce *ex cathedrâ* that they formed no part of the canon of Scripture. Sometimes, as in Augustine, we watch the conflict in a higher air; we see the ascetic absorption in the new faith at war with the truer instinct, which warns him that all noble emotions are in reality mutually supporting, and that we debase instead of ennobling our devotion to one supreme ideal if we shrink from recognising the goodness and greatness of ideals which are not to us so dear. But even in the wild legends which in the Middle Ages cluster so thickly round the name of Virgil, even in the distorted fancies of the hamlet or the cloister, we can discern some glimmering perception of an actual truth. It is not true, as the Spanish legend tells us, that “Virgil’s eyes first saw the star of Bethlehem;” but it is true that in none more fully than in him is found that temper which offers all worldly wealth, all human learning,

at the feet of Purity, and for the knowledge of Truth. It is not true that Virgil was a magician; that he clove the rock; that he wrought a gigantic figure which struck a note of warning at the far-seen onset of tumult or of war; but it is true that he was one of those who "*like giants stand, to sentinel enchanted land,*" whose high thoughts have caught and reflect the radiance of some mysterious and unrisen day.

Although the interest which subsequent ages have taken in the religion of Virgil has turned mainly upon his relation to Christianity, he would himself, of course, have judged in another light the growth of his inward being. A celebrated passage in the Georgics has revealed to us his mood of mind in a decisive hour. To understand it we must refer to the strongest influence which his youth was destined to undergo. When Virgil was on the threshold of life a poem was published which, perhaps, of all single monuments of Roman genius, conveys to us the most penetrating conception of the irresistible force of Rome. There is no need to deck Lucretius with any attributes not his own. We may grant that his poetry is often uncouth, his science confused, his conception of human existence steeped in a lurid gloom. But no voice like his has ever proclaimed the nothingness of "momentary man," no prophet so convincing has ever thundered in our ears the appalling Gospel of Death. Few

minds, perhaps, that were not stiffly cased in foregone conclusions have ever met the storm of his passionate eloquence without bending before the blast, without doubting for an hour of their inmost instincts, and half believing that "as we felt no woe in times long gone, when from all the earth to battle the Carthaginians came," so now it may be man's best and only hope to quench in annihilation his unsated longings and his deep despair.

On Virgil's nature, disposed at once to vague sadness and to profound inquiry, the six books on the Nature of Things produced their maximum effect. Alike in his thought and language we see the Lucretian influence mingling with that spirit of natural religion which seems to have been his own earliest bent; and at last, in the passage above referred to,¹ he pauses between the two hypotheses, each alike incapable of proof; that which assumes that because we see in nature an impersonal order, therefore there is no more to see, and that which assumes that because we feel within us a living spirit, the universe, too, lives around us and breathes with the divine.

"If thou thy secrets grudge me, nor assign
So high a lore to such a heart as mine,—
Still, Nature, let me still thy beauty know,
Love the clear streams that thro' thy valleys flow,

¹ G. ii. 490. The last two lines of the version here given merely summarise a passage too long for quotation.

To many a forest lawn that love proclaim,
 Breathe the full soul, and make an end of fame !
 Ah me, Spercheos ! oh to watch alway
 On Taygeta the Spartan girls at play !
 Or cool in Hæmus' gloom to feel me laid,
 Deep in his branching solitudes of shade !

Happy the man whose steadfast eye surveys
 The whole world's truth, its hidden works and ways,—
 Happy, who thus beneath his feet has thrown
 All fears and fates, and Hell's insatiate moan !—
 Blest, too, were he the sister nymphs who knew,
 Pan, and Sylvanus, and the sylvan crew ;—
 On kings and crowds his careless glance he flings,
 And scorns the treacheries of crowds and kings ;
 Far north the leaguered hordes are hovering dim ;
 Danube and Dacian have no dread for him ;
 No shock of laws can fright his steadfast home,
 Nor realms in ruin nor all the fates of Rome.
 Round him no glare of envied wealth is shed,
 From him no piteous beggar prays for bread ;
 Earth, Earth herself the unstinted gift will give,
 Her trustful children need but reap and live ;
 She hath man's peace 'mid all the worldly stir,
 One with himself he is, if one with her."

And henceforth without fanatical blindness, but
 with a slow deliberate fervour, he elects to act upon
 the latter opinion ; and from this time we find little
 trace of the influence of Lucretius in his poems,
 except it may be some quickening of that delight
 in the hidden things of nature which makes the
 world's creation Iopas',¹ as it was Silenus'² song ;

¹ A. i. 743.

² E. vi. 31

some deepening of that mournful wonder with which he regards the contrast between the hopes and fates of men.

And is there, then, anything in Virgil's creed more definite than this vague spirituality? Is there any moral government of the world of which he can speak to us from the heart? If so, it is not in connection with the old gods of Rome, for they have lost their individual life. They are no longer like those gods of Homer's, who "sat on the brow of Callicolone," awful in their mingling of aloofness and reality, of terror and subduing charm. Jove's frowns, Cytherea's caresses, in the *Æneid* assume alike an air of frigid routine. And in the unfinished later books the references to the heavenly council-board are of so curt and formal a character that they can deceive no one. It is as if the poet felt bound to say, "that the gods had taken the matter into their most serious consideration,"¹ "that it was with great regret that the gods found themselves unable to concede a longer term of existence to the Daunian hero,"² while all the time he was well aware that the gods had never been consulted in the matter at all.

And even that more real and comprehensive religion of Rome, the inspiring belief in the destinies of the Eternal City, lacked that which is lacking to all such religions, whether their object be one city

¹ A. xii. 843.

² A. xii. 725.

only or the whole corporate commonwealth of men. There was no place in it for individual recompense ; it left unanswered the imperious demand of the moral sense that not one sentient soul shall be created to agony that others may be blest. Such faiths may inspire ceremonial, may prompt to action, but they cannot justify the ways of God to man, nor satisfy or control the heart.

It is well known that in the central passage of the *Æneid*, the speech of the shade of Anchises to *Æneas* in Elysium,¹ Virgil has abruptly relinquished his efforts to revive or harmonise legendary beliefs, and has propounded an answer to the riddle of the universe in an unexpectedly definite form. It would be interesting to trace the elements of Stoic, Platonic, Pythagorean thought which combine in this remarkable passage. But such an inquiry would be beyond our present scope, and must in any case rest largely upon conjecture, for Virgil, who seems to have been working upon this exposition till the last,² and who meant, as we know, to devote to philosophy the rest of his life after the completion of the *Æneid*, has given us no indication of the process by which he reached these results—results singular as contrasting so widely with the official religion of which he was in some sort the representative, yet which may

¹ A. vi. 724-755.

² See A. vi. 743-7, as indicating that the arrangement of this passage is incomplete.

surprise us less when we consider their close coincidence with the independent conclusions of many thinkers of ancient and modern times. A brief description of the passage referred to will fitly conclude the present essay.

Æneas, warned of Anchises in a vision, has penetrated the underworld to consult his father's shade. He finds Anchises surrounded by an innumerable multitude of souls, who congregate on Lethe's shore. His father tells him that these souls are drinking the waters of oblivion, and will then return to live again on earth. Æneas is astonished at this, and the form of the question which he asks¹ is in itself highly significant. Compared, for example, with the famous contrast which the Homeric Achilles draws between even the poorest life on happy earth and the forlorn kingship of the shades, it indicates that a change has taken place which of all speculative changes is perhaps the most important, that the ideal has been shifted from the visible to the invisible, from the material to the spiritual world—

“O father, must I deem that souls can pray
Hence to turn backward to the worldly day?
Change for that weight of flesh these forms more fair,
For that sun's sheen this paradisal air?”

The speech of Anchises in answer is in a certain sense the most Virgilian passage in Virgil. All his

¹ A. vi. 719.

characteristics appear in it in their highest intensity; the pregnant allusiveness, the oracular concentration, the profound complexity, and through them all that unearthly march of song, that "Elysian beauty, melancholy grace," which made him the one fit master for that other soul whom he "*mise dentro alle segrete cose*," to whom in face of purgatory's fiercest fire¹ he promised the reward of constancy, and spoke of the redemptions of love.

The translator may well hesitate before such a passage as this. But as a knowledge of the Theodicy here unfolded is absolutely necessary to the English reader who would understand Virgil aright, some version shall be given here—

"One Life through all the immense creation runs,
One Spirit is the moon's, the sea's, the sun's ;
All forms in the air that fly, on the earth that creep,
And the unknown nameless monsters of the deep,—
Each breathing thing obeys one Mind's control,
And in all substance is a single Soul.
First to each seed a fiery force is given ;
And every creature was begot in heaven ;
Only their flight must hateful flesh delay
And gross limbs moribund and cumbering clay.
So from that hindering prison and night forlorn
Thy hopes and fears, thy joys and woes are born,
Who only seest, till death dispart thy gloom,
The true world glow through crannies of a tomb.

¹ Purg. xxvii. 20

Nor all at once thine ancient ills decay,
Nor quite with death thy plagues are purged away ;
In wondrous wise hath the iron entered in,
And through and through thee is a stain of sin ;
Which yet again in wondrous wise must be
Cleansed of the fire, abolished in the sea ;
Ay, thro' and thro' that soul unclothed must go
Such spirit-winds as where they list will blow ;—
O hovering many an age ! for ages bare,
Void in the void and impotent in air !

Then, since his sins unshriven the sinner wait,
And to each soul that soul herself is Fate,
Few to heaven's many mansions straight are sped
(Past without blame that Judgment of the dead),
The most shall mourn till tarrying Time hath wrought
The extreme deliverance of the airy thought,—
Hath left unsoiled by fear or foul desire
The spirit's self, the elemental fire.

And last to Lethe's stream on the ordered day
These all God summoneth in great array ;
Who from that draught reborn, no more shall know
Memory of past or dread of destined woe,
But all shall there the ancient pain forgive,
Forget their life, and will again to live."

The shade of Anchises is silent here. But let us add some lines from the *Georgics*,¹ in which Virgil carries these souls yet farther, and to the term of their wondrous way—

"Then since from God those lesser lives began,
And the eager spirits entered into man,

¹ G. iv. 223.

To God again the enfranchised soul must tend,
He is her home, her Author is her End ;
No death is hers ; when earthly eyes grow dim
Starlike she soars and Godlike melts in Him."

But why must we recur to an earlier poem for the consummation which was most of all needed here? and why, at the end of the sixth book, has the poet struck that last strange note of doubt and discord, dismissing Æneas from the shades by the deluding Ivory Gate, proclaiming, as it were, like Plato, his Theodicy as "neither false nor true," as a dream among dreams that wander and "visions unbelievable and fair?" We turn, like Dante, in hope of the wise guide's reply. But he has left us at last alone.¹ He has led us to the region "where of himself he can see no more;"² we must expect from him no longer "either word or sign." He parts from us in the "antelucan splendour," and at the gate of heaven, at the very moment when a hundred angels sing aloud with fuller meaning his own words of solemn welcome and unforgetful love.³ To Dante all the glory of paradise could not avail to keep his eyes from scorching tears at his "sweetest father's" sad withdrawal and uncompleted way:— we too, perhaps, may feel mournfully the lot of man as we think of him on whose yearning spirit all revelation that nature, or that science, or that faith

¹ Purg. xxx. 49.

² Purg. xxvii. 129, 139.

³ Purg. xxx. 21.

could show, fell only as day's last glory on the fading vision of the Carthaginian queen ¹—

“For thrice she turned, and thrice had fain dispread
Her dying arms to lift her dying head ;
Thrice in high heaven, with dimmed eyes wandering
wide,
She sought the light, and found the light, and sighed.”

So was it with those who by themselves should not be made perfect ; they differed from the saints of Christendom not so much in the emotion which they offered as in the emotion with which they were repaid ; it was elevation but it was not ecstasy ; it came to them not as hope but as calm. What touch of unattainable holiness was lacking for their reception into Dante's Paradisal Rose ? what ardour of love was still unknown to them which should have been their foretaste and their pledge of heaven ? “Dark night enwraps their heads with hovering gloom,” and from this man, their solitary rearguard, and on the very confines of the day, we can part only in words of such sad reverence as salute in his own song that last and most divinely glorified of the inhabitants of the underworld ²—

“Give, give me lilies ; thick the flowers be laid
To greet that mighty, melancholy shade ;
With such poor gifts let-me his praise maintain,
And mourn with useless tears, and crown in vain.”

¹ A. iv. 690.

² A. vi. 883.

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS.

Ἄγουν δέ μ', ὦ Ζεῦ, καὶ σύ γ' ἡ Πεπρωμένη,
ὅποι ποθ' ὑμῖν εἰμι διατεταγμένος·
ὥς ἔψομαι γ' ἄοκνος· ἦν δὲ μὴ θέλω,
κακὸς γενόμενος οὐδὲν ἤττον ἔψομαι.

CLEANTHES.

SOME apology may seem to be due from one who ventures to treat once again of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Few characters in history have been oftener or more ably discussed during the present age, an age whose high aims and uncertain creed have found at once impulse and sympathy in the meditations of the crowned philosopher. And, finally, the most subtle and attractive of living historians has closed his strange portrait-gallery with this majestic figure, accounting that the sun of Christianity was not fully risen till it had seen the paling of the old world's last and purest star.

The subject has lost, no doubt, its literary freshness, but its moral and philosophical significance is still unexhausted. Even an increased interest, indeed, may be felt at the present time in considering

the relations which the philosophy of Marcus bears either to ancient or to modern religious thought. For he has been made, as it were, the saint and exemplar of Agnosticism, the type of all such virtue and wisdom as modern criticism can allow to be sound or permanent. It will be the object of the following essay to suggest some reflections on the position thus assigned to him, dwelling only incidentally, and as briefly as may be consistent with clearness, on the more familiar aspects of his opinions and his career.

Character and circumstances, rather than talent or originality, give to the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius their especial value and charm. And although the scanty notices of his life which have come down to us have now been often repeated, it seems necessary to allude to some of the more characteristic of them if we would understand the spiritual outlook of one who is not a closet-philosopher moralising *in vacuo*, but the son of Pius, the father of Commodus, the master of a declining world.

The earliest statue which we know of Marcus represents him as a youth offering sacrifice. The earliest story of him, before his adoption into the Imperial family, is of his initiation, at eight years old, as a Salian priest of Mars, when the crowns flung by the other priests fell here and there around the recumbent statue, but the crown which young Marcus threw to him lit and rested on the war-

god's head. The boy-priest, we are told, could soon conduct all the ceremonies of the Salian cult without the usual prompter, for he served in all its offices, and knew all its hymns by heart. And it well became him thus to begin by exhibiting the characteristic piety of a child ;—who passes in his growing years through the forms of worship, as of thought, which have satisfied his remote forefathers, and ripens himself for his adult philosophies with the consecrated tradition of the past.

Our next glimpse is of the boy growing into manhood in the household of his adopted father, Antoninus Pius, whom he is already destined to succeed on the Imperial throne. One of the lessons for which Marcus afterwards revered his father's memory was the lesson of simplicity maintained in the palace of princes, "far removed from the habits of the rich." The correspondence between the Imperial boy and his tutor, Fronto, shows us how pronounced this simplicity was, and casts a curious side-light on the power of the Roman Emperor, who can impress his own individuality with so uncompromising a hand not only on the affairs of the empire, but on the personal habits of his court and *entourage*. In the modern world the more absolute a monarch is in one way, the more is he in another way fettered and constrained ; for his absolutism relies on an artificial prestige which can dispense with no means of impressing the vulgar mind. And

in freer countries there is always a set of necessary persons, an habitual tone of manners, which the sovereign cannot afford to ignore. A George III. may lead a frugal family life, but he is forced to conciliate and consort with social leaders of habits quite opposite to his own. A William IV. who fails to do this adequately is pronounced to be "not in society." Antoninus Pius might certainly have been said to be "out of society," but that there was no society for him to be in except his own. The "optimates," whose opinion Cicero treats as the acknowledged standard—a group of notables enjoying social as well as official pre-eminence—had practically ceased to exist. Even the Senate, whose dignity the Antonines so sedulously cherished, consisted mainly of new and low-born men. Everything depended on the individual tastes of the ruler. Play-actors were at the head of society under Nero, spies under Domitian, philosophers under the Antonines.

The letters of the young Marcus to Fronto are very much such letters as might be written at the present day by the home-taught son of an English squire to a private tutor to whom he was much attached. They are, however, more effusive than an English style allows, and although Marcus in his youth was a successful athlete, they seldom refer to games or hunting. I translate one of them as a specimen of the rest:—

"I slept late this morning on account of my cold, but it is better. From five in the morning till

nine I partly read Cato on Agriculture, and partly wrote, not quite such rubbish as yesterday. Then I greeted my father, and then soothed my throat with honey-water without absolutely gargling. Then I attended my father as he offered sacrifice. Then to breakfast. What do you think I ate? only a little bread, though I saw the others devouring beans, onions, and sardines! Then we went out to the vintage, and got hot and merry, but left a few grapes still hanging, as the old poet says, 'atop on the topmost bough.' At noon we got home again; I worked a little, but it was not much good. Then I chatted a long time with my mother as she sat on her bed. My conversation consisted of, 'What do you suppose my Fronto is doing at this moment?' to which she answered, 'And my Gratia, what is she doing?' and then I, 'And our little birdie, Gratia the less?' And while we were talking and quarrelling as to which of us loved all of you the best, the gong sounded, which meant that my father had gone across to the bath. So we bathed and dined in the oil-press room. I don't mean that we bathed in the press-room; but we bathed and then dined, and amused ourselves with listening to the peasants' banter. And now that I am in my own room again, before I roll over and snore, I am fulfilling my promise and giving an account of my day to my dear tutor; and if I could love him better than I do I would consent to miss him even more than I miss him now. Take care of yourself, my best and dearest Fronto, wherever you are. The fact is that I love you, and you are far away."

Among the few hints which the correspondence contains of the pupil's rank is one curiously charac-

teristic of his times and his destiny. Tutor and pupil, it seems, were in the habit of sending to each other "hypotheses," or imaginary cases, for the sake of practice in dealing with embarrassing circumstances as they arose. Marcus puts to Fronto the following "hard case": "A Roman consul at the public games changes his consular dress for a gladiator's, and kills a lion in the amphitheatre before the assembled people. What is to be done to him?" The puzzled Fronto contents himself with replying that such a thing could not possibly happen. But the boy's prevision was true. A generation later this very thing was done by a man who was not only a Roman consul, but a Roman Emperor, and the son of Marcus himself.

These were Marcus' happiest days. The companionship of Pius was a school of all the virtues. His domestic life with Faustina, if we are to believe contemporary letters rather than the scandal of the next century, was, at first at any rate, a model of happiness and peace. Marcus was already forty years old when Pius died. The nineteen years which remained to him were mainly occupied in driving back Germanic peoples from the northern frontiers of the empire. This labour was interrupted in A.D. 175 by the revolt of Avidius Cassius, an event which Marcus employed as a great occasion for magnanimity. The story is one which some dramatist might well seize upon, and show, with a

truer groundwork than Corneille in *Cinna*, how impossible is resentment to the philosophic soul. But the moment in these latter years which may be selected as most characteristic was perhaps that of the departure of Marcus to Germany in A.D. 178 for his last and sternest war. That great irruption of the Marcomanni was compared by subsequent historians to the invasion of Hannibal. It was in fact, and it was dimly felt to be, the beginning of the end. The terrified Romans resorted to every expedient which could attract the favour of heaven or fortify the spirit of man. The Emperor threw a blood-stained spear from the temple of Mars towards the unknown North, invoking thus for the last time in antique fashion the tutelary divinity of Rome. The images of all the gods were laid on couches in the sight of men, and that holy banquet was set before them which constituted their worshippers' most solemn appeal. But no sacrifices henceforth were to be for long effectual, nor omens favourable again; they could only show the "Roman peace" no longer sacred, the "Roman world" no longer stretching "past the sun's year-long way," but Janus' temple-doors for ever open, and Terminus receding upon Rome. Many new rites were also performed, many foreign gods were approached with strange expiations. But the strangest feature in this religious revival lay in an act of the Emperor himself. He was entreated, says Vulcatius, to give

a parting address to his subjects before he set out into the wilderness of the north ; and for three days he expounded his philosophy to the people of Rome. The anecdote is a strange one, but hardly in itself improbable. It accords so well with Marcus' trust in the power of reason, his belief in the duty of laying the truth before men ! One can imagine the sincere gaze, such as his coins show to us ; the hand, as in the great equestrian statue of the Capitol, uplifted, as though to bless ; the countenance controlled, as his biographers tell us, to exhibit neither joy nor pain ; the voice and diction, not loud nor striking, but grave and clear, as he bade his hearers "reverence the dæmon within them," and "pass from one unselfish action to another, with memory of God." Like the fabled Arthur, he was, as it were, the conscience amid the warring passions of his knights ; like Arthur, he was himself going forth to meet "death, or he knew not what mysterious doom."

For indeed his last years are lost in darkness. A few anecdotes tell of his failing body and resolute will ; a few bas-reliefs give in fragments a confused story of the wilderness and of war. We see marshes and forests, bridges and battles, captive Sarmatians brought to judgment, and Marcus still with his hand uplifted as though bestowing pardon or grace.

The region in which these last years were spent is to this day one of the most melancholy in Europe

The forces of nature run to waste without use or beauty. The great Danube spreads himself languidly between uncertain shores. As it was in the days of Marcus so is it now; the traveller from Vienna eastward still sees the white mist cling to the desolate river-terraces, the clouds of wild-fowl swoop and settle among the reedy islands, and along the bays and promontories of the brimming stream.

But over these years hung a shadow darker than could be cast by any visible foe. Plague had become endemic in the Roman world. The pestilence brought from Asia by Verus in A.D. 166 had not yet abated; it had destroyed already (as it would seem) half the population of the Empire; it was achieving its right to be considered by careful historians as the most terrible calamity which has ever fallen upon men. Destined, as it were, to sever race from race and era from era, the plague struck its last blow against the Roman people upon the person of the Emperor himself. He died in the camp, alone. "Why weep for me," were his last words of stern self-suppression, "and not think rather of the pestilence, and of the death of all?"

When the news of his death reached Rome few tears, we are told, were shed. For it seemed to the people that Marcus, like Marcellus, had been but lent to the Roman race; it was natural that he should pass back again from the wilderness to his celestial home. Before the official honours had been

paid to him the Senate and people by acclamation at his funeral saluted him as "The Propitious God." No one, says the chronicler, thought of him as Emperor any more; but the young men called on "Marcus, my father,"⁺ the men of middle age on "Marcus, my brother," the old men on "Marcus, my son." *Homo homini deus est, si suum officium sciat*—and it may well be that those who thus honoured and thus lamented him had never known a truer son or brother, father or god.

It does not fall within the scope of this essay to enumerate in detail the measures by which Marcus had earned the gratitude of the Empire. But it is important to remember that neither war nor philosophy had impaired his activity as an administrator. Politically his reign, like that of Pius, was remarkable for his respectful treatment of the senatorial order. Instead of regarding senators as the natural objects of imperial jealousy, or prey of imperial avarice, he endeavoured by all means to raise their dignity and consideration. Some of them he employed as a kind of privy council, others as governors of cities. When at Rome he attended every meeting of the Senate; and even when absent in Campania he would travel back expressly to be present at any important debate; nor did he ever leave the council-hall till the sitting was adjourned.

While Marcus thus attempted to revive a responsible upper class, he was far from neglecting the

interests of the poor. He developed the scheme of state nurture and education for needy free-born children which the Flavian emperors had begun. He reformed the local government of Italy, and made more careful provision against the recurring danger of scarcity. He instituted the "tutelary prætorship" which was to watch over the rights of orphans — a class often unjustly treated at Rome. And he fostered and supervised that great development of civil and criminal law which, under the Antonines, was steadily giving protection to the minor, justice to the woman, rights to the slave, and transforming the stern maxims of Roman procedure into a fit basis for the jurisprudence of the modern world.

But indeed the true life and influence of Marcus had scarcely yet begun. In his case, as in many others, it was not the main occupation, the ostensible business of his life, which proved to have the most enduring value. His most effective hours were not those spent in his long adjudications, his ceaseless battles, his strenuous ordering of the concerns of the Roman world. Rather they were the hours of solitude and sadness, when, "among the Quadi," "on the Granua," "at Carnuntum," he consoled his lonely spirit by jotting down in fragmentary sentences the principles which were his guide through life. The little volume was preserved by some fortunate accident. For many centuries it was accounted

as a kind of curiosity of literature—as heading the brief list of the writings of kings. From time to time some earnest spirit discovered that the help given by the little book was of surer quality than he could find in many a volume which promised more. One and another student was moved to translate it—from old Gataker of Rotherhithe, completing the work in his seventy-eighth year, as his best preparation for death, to “Cardinal Francis Barberini the elder, who dedicated the translation to his soul, in order to make it redder than his purple at the sight of the virtues of this Gentile.”¹ But the complete success of the book was reserved for the present century. I will quote one passage only as showing the position which it has taken among some schools of modern thought—a passage in which a writer celebrated for his nice distinctions and balanced praise has spoken of the *Meditations* in terms of more unmingled eulogy than he has ever bestowed elsewhere:—

“Véritable Evangile éternel,” says M. Renan, “le livre des Pensées ne vieillira jamais, car il n’affirme aucun dogme. L’Evangile a vieilli en certaines parties; la science ne permet plus d’admettre la naïve conception du surnaturel qui en fait la base. Le surnaturel n’est dans les Pensées qu’une petite tache insignifiante, qui n’atteint pas la merveilleuse beauté du fond. La

¹ See the preface to Mr. Long’s admirable translation. The quotations from the *Meditations* in this essay are given partly in Mr. Long’s words.

science pourrait détruire Dieu et l'âme, que le livre des Pensées resterait jeune encore de vie et de vérité. La religion de Marc-Aurèle, comme le fut par moments celle de Jésus, est la religion absolue, celle qui résulte du simple fait d'une haute conscience morale placée en face de l'univers. Elle n'est ni d'une race ni d'un pays. Aucune révolution, aucun progrès, aucune découverte ne pourront la changer."

What then, we may ask, and how attained to, was the wisdom which is thus highly praised? How came it that a man of little original power, in an age of rhetoric and commonplace, was able to rise to the height of so great an argument, and to make of his most secret ponderings the religious manual of a far-distant world? This question can scarcely be answered without a few preliminary reflections on the historical development of religion at Rome.

Among all the civilised religions of antiquity the Roman might well seem the least congenial either to the beliefs or to the emotions of modern times. From the very first it bears all the marks of a political origin. When the antiquarian Varro treats first of the state and then of the gods, "because in order that gods may be established states must first exist," he is but retracing faithfully the real genesis of the cult of Rome. Composed of elements borrowed from various quarters, it dealt with all in a legal, external, unimaginative spirit.

The divination and ghost-religion, which it drew from the Etruscans and other primitive sources, survived in the state-augury and in the domestic worship of the Lares, only in a formal and half-hearted way. The nature-religion, which came from the Aryan forefathers of Rome, grew frigid indeed when it was imprisoned in the *Indigitamenta*, or Official Handy-book of the Gods. It is not to Rome, though it may often be to Italy, that the anthropologist must look for instances of those quaint rites which form in many countries the oldest existing links between civilised and primitive conceptions of the operations of an unseen Power. It is not from Rome that the poet must hope for fresh developments of those exquisite and unconscious allegories, which even in their most hackneyed reproduction still breathe on us the glory of the early world. The most enthusiastic of pagans or neo-pagans could scarcely reverence with much emotion the botanical accuracy of Nodotus, the god of Nodes, and Volutina, the goddess of Petioles, nor tremble before the terrors of Spiniensis and Robigus, the austere Powers of Blight and Brambles, nor eagerly implore the favour of Stercutius and Sterquilinus, the beneficent deities of Manure.¹

This shadowy system of divinities is a mere

¹ Of some of these Powers it is hard to say whether they are to be considered as celestial or the reverse. Such are Carnea, the Goddess of Embonpoint, and Genius Portorii Publici, the Angel of Indirect Taxation.

elaboration of the primitive notion that religion consists in getting whatever can be got from the gods, and that this must be done by asking the right personages in the proper terms. The boast of historian or poet that the old Romans were "most religious mortals," or that they "surpassed in piety the gods themselves," refers entirely to punctuality of outward observance, considered as a definite *quid pro quo* for the good things desired. It is not hard to be "more pious than the gods" if piety on our part consists in asking decorously for what we want, and piety on their part in immediately granting it.

It is plain that it was not in this direction that the Romans found a vent for the reverence and the self-devotion in which their character was assuredly not deficient. Their true worship, their true piety, were reserved for a more concrete, though still a vast ideal. As has been often said, the religion of the Romans was Rome. Her true saints were her patriots, Curtius and Scævola, Horatius, Regulus, Cato. Her "heaven-descended maxim" was not γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, but *Delenda est Carthago*. But a concrete idea must necessarily lose in fixedness what it gains in actuality. As Rome became the Roman Empire the temper of her religion must needs change with the fortunes of its object. While the fates of the city yet hung in the balance the very thought of her had been

enough to make *Roman* for all ages a synonym for *heroic* virtue. But when a heterogeneous world-wide empire seemed to derive its unity from the Emperor's personality alone, men felt that the object of so many deeds of piety had disappeared through their very success. Devotion to Rome was transformed into the worship of Cæsar, and the one strain of vital religion which had run through the Commonwealth was stiffened like all the rest into a dead official routine.

Something better than this was needed for cultivated and serious men. To take one instance only, what was the Emperor himself to worship? It might be very well for obsequious provinces to erect statues to the *Indulgentia Cæsaris*. But Cæsar himself could hardly be expected to adore his own Good-humour. In epochs like these, when a national religion has lost its validity in thoughtful minds, and the nation is pausing, as it were, for further light, there is a fair field for all comers. There is an opportunity for those who wish either to eliminate the religious instinct, or to distort it, or to rationalise it, or to vivify; for the secularist and the charlatan, for the philosopher and the prophet. In Rome there was assuredly no lack of negation and indifference, of superstition and its inseparable fraud. But two streams of higher tendency rushed into the spiritual vacuum, two currents which represented, broadly speaking, the

main religious and the main ethical tradition of mankind. The first of these, which we must pass by for the present, had its origin in the legendary Pythagoras and the remoter East. The second took the form of a generalised and simplified Stoicism.

Stoicism, of course, was no new thing in Rome. It had come in with Greek culture at the time of the Punic wars; it had commended itself by its proud precision to Roman habits of thought and life; it had been welcomed as a support for the state religion, a method of allegorising Olympus which yet might be accounted orthodox. The names of Cato and Brutus maintained the Stoic tradition through the death-throes of the Republic. But the stern independence of the Porch was not invoked to aid in the ceremonial revival with which Augustus would fain have renewed the old Roman virtue. It is among the horrors of Nero's reign that we find Stoicism taking its place as a main spiritual support of men. But as it becomes more efficacious it becomes also less distinctive. In Seneca, in Epictetus, most of all in Marcus himself, we see it gradually discarding its paradoxes, its controversies, its character as a specialised philosophical sect. We hear less of its logic, its cosmogony, its portrait of the ideal Sage. It insists rather on what may be termed the catholic verities of all philosophers, on the sole importance of virtue,

the spiritual oneness of the universe, the brotherhood of men. From every point of view this latter Stoicism afforded unusual advantages to the soul which aimed at wisdom and virtue. It was a philosophy; but by dint of time and trial it had run itself clear of the extravagance and unreality of the schools. It was a reform; but its attitude towards the established religion was at once friendly and independent, so that it was neither cramped by deference nor embittered by reaction. Its doctrines were old and true; yet it had about it a certain freshness as being in fact the first free and meditative outlook on the universe to which the Roman people had attained. And, more than all, it had ready to its hand a large remainder of the most famous store of self-devotedness that the world has seen. Stoicism was the heir of the old Roman virtue; happy is the philosophy which can support its own larger creed on the instincts of duty inherited from many a generation of narrow uprightness, of unquestioned law.

But the opportunity for the very flower of Stoic excellence was due to the caprice of a great amateur. Hadrian admired both beauty and virtue; his choice of Antinous and of Marcus gave to the future world the standard of the sculptor and the standard of the moralist; the completest types of physical and moral perfection which Roman history has handed down. And yet among the names of his bene-

factors with which the scrupulous gratitude of Marcus has opened his self-communings, the name *Hadrianus* does not occur. The boy thus raised to empire has passed by Hadrian, who gave him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, for Severus, who taught him to disdain them all.

Among all the *Meditations* none is at once more simple and more original than this exordium of thanksgiving. It is the single-hearted utterance of a soul which knows neither desire nor pride, which considers nothing as gain in her life's journey except the love of those souls who have loved her,—the memory of those who have fortified her by the spectacle and communication of virtue.

The thoughts that follow on this prelude are by no means of an exclusively Stoic type. They are both more emotional and more agnostic than would have satisfied Chrysippus or Zeno. They are not conceived in that tone of certainty and conviction in which men lecture or preach, but with those sad reserves, those varying moods of hope and despondency, which are natural to a man's secret ponderings on the riddle of the world. Even the fundamental Stoic belief in God and Providence is not beyond question in Marcus' eyes. The passages where he repeats the alternative "either gods or atoms" are too strongly expressed to allow us to think that the antithesis is only a trick of style.

“Either confusion and entanglement and scattering again : or unity, order, providence. If the first case be, why do I wish to live amid the clashings of chance and chaos ? or care for aught else but to become earth myself at last ? and why am I disturbed, since this dispersion will come whatever I do ? but if the latter case be the true one, I reverence and stand firm, and trust in him who rules.

“Thus wags the world, up and down, from age to age. And either the universal mind determines each event ; and if so, accept then that which it determines ; or it has ordered once for all, and the rest follows in sequence ; or indivisible elements are the origin of all things. In a word, if there be a god, then all is well ; if all things go at random, act not at random thou.”

And along with this speculative openness, so much more sympathetic to the modern reader than the rhetoric of Seneca or even the lofty dogmatism of Epictetus, there is a total absence of the Stoic pride. His self-reverence is of that truest kind which is based on a man's conception not of what he is, but of what he ought to be.

“Men cannot admire the sharpness of thy wits. Be it so ; but many other things there are of which thou canst not say, I was not formed for them. Show those things which are wholly in thy power to show : sincerity, dignity, laboriousness, self-denial, contentment, frugality, kindness, frankness, simplicity, seriousness, magnanimity. Seest thou not how many things there are in which, with no excuse of natural incapacity, thou voluntarily fallest short ? or art thou compelled by defect of nature

to murmur and be stingy and flatter and complain of thy poor body, and cajole and boast, and disquiet thyself in vain? No, by the gods! but of all these things thou mightest have been rid long ago. Nay, if indeed thou be somewhat slow and dull of comprehension, thou must exert thyself about this too, and not neglect it nor be contented with thy dulness."

Words like these, perhaps, exalt human nature in our eyes quite as highly as if we had heard Marcus insisting, like some others of his school, that "the sage is as useful to Zeus as Zeus to him," or that "courage is more creditable to sages than it is to gods, since gods have it by nature, but sages by practice."

And having thus overheard his self-communings, with what a sense of soundness and reality do we turn to the steady fervour of his constantly repeated ideal!

"Let the god within thee be the guardian of a living being, masculine, adult, political, and a Roman, and a ruler; who has ~~taken~~ taken up his post in life as one that awaits with readiness the signal that shall summon him away. . . . And such a man, who delays no longer to strive to be in the number of the best, is as a priest and servant of the gods, obeying that god who is in himself enshrined, who renders him unsoiled of pleasure, unharmed by any pain, untouched by insult, feeling no wrong, a wrestler in the noblest struggle, which is, that by no passion he may be overthrown; dyed to the depth in justice, and with his whole heart welcoming whatsoever cometh to him and is ordained."

The ideal is sketched on Stoic lines, but the writer's temperament is not cast in the old Stoic mould. He reminds us rather of modern sensitiveness, in his shrinking from the presence of coarse and selfish persons, and in his desire, obvious enough but constantly checked, for the sympathy and approbation of those with whom he lived. The self-sufficing aspect of Stoicism has in him lost all its exclusiveness; it is represented only by the resolute recurrence to conscience as the one support against the buffets of the world.

"I do my duty; other things trouble me not; for either they are things without life, or things without reason, or things that have wandered and know not the way."

And thus, while all the dealings of Marcus with his fellow-men are summed up in the two endeavours—to imitate their virtues, and to amend, or at least patiently to endure, their defects—it is pretty plain which of these two efforts was most frequently needed. His fragmentary thoughts present us with a long series of struggles to rise from the mood of disgust and depression into the mood of serene benevolence, by dwelling strongly on a few guiding lines of self-admonition.

"Begin the morning by saying to thyself: I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by reason of their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who have seen the nature of the good that it is

beautiful, and of the bad that it is ugly, and the nature of him who sins, that it is akin to mine, and participates in the same divinity, I can neither be injured by any of them, for no man can fix a foulness on me; nor can I be angry nor hate my brother."

There is reason, indeed, to fear that Marcus loved his enemies too well; that he was too much given to blessing those that cursed him. It is to him, rather than to any Christian potentate, that we must look for an example of the dangers of applying the gospel maxims too unreservedly to the business of the turbid world. For indeed the practical danger lies not in the overt adoption of those counsels of an ideal mildness and mercy, but even in the mere attainment of a temper so calm and lofty that the promptings of vanity or anger are felt no more. The task of curbing and punishing other men, of humiliating their arrogance, exposing their falsity, upbraiding their sloth, is in itself so distasteful, when there is no personal rivalry or resentment to prompt it, that it is sure to be performed too gently, or neglected for more congenial duties. Avidius Cassius, burning his disorderly soldiers alive to gain himself a reputation for vigour, was more comprehensible to the mass of men, more immediately efficacious, than Marcus representing to the selfish and wayward Commodus "that even bees did not act in such a manner, nor any of those creatures which live in troops."

But the very incongruity between the duties which Marcus was called on to perform and the spirit which he brought to their performance, the fate which made him by nature a sage and a saint, by profession a ruler and a warrior, all this gave to his character a dignity and a completeness which it could scarcely otherwise have attained. The master of the world more than other men might feel himself bound to "live as on a mountain;" he whose look was life or death to millions might best set the example of the single-heartedness which need hide the thought of no waking moment from any one's knowledge,—till a man's eyes should reveal all that passed within him, "even as there is no veil upon a star." The Stoic philosophy which required that the sage should be indifferent to worldly goods found its crowning exemplar in a sage who possessed them all.

And, indeed, in the case of Marcus the difficulty was not to disdain the things of earth, but to care for them enough. The touch of Cynic crudity with which he analyses such things as men desire, reminds us sometimes of those scornful pictures of secular life which have been penned in the cloister. For that indifference to transitory things which has often made the religious fanatic the worst of citizens is not the danger of the fanatic alone. It is a part also of the melancholy of the magnanimous; of the mood when the "joy and gladness" which the Stoics promised to their sage die down in the midst of

“such darkness and dirt,” as Marcus calls it, “that it is hard to imagine what there is which is worthy to be prized highly, or seriously pursued.”

Nay, it seems to him that even if, in Plato’s phrase, he could become “the spectator of all time and of all existence,” there would be nothing in the sight to stir the exultation, to change the solitude of the sage. The universe is full of living creatures, but there is none of them whose existence is so glorious and blessed that by itself it can justify all other Being; the worlds are destroyed and re-created with an endless renewal, but they are tending to no world more pure than themselves; they are not even, as in Hindoo myth, ripening in a secular expectancy till Buddha come; they are but repeating the same littlenesses from the depth to the height of heaven, and reiterating throughout all eternity the fears and follies of a day.

“If thou wert lifted on high and didst behold the manifold fates of men; and didst discern at once all creatures that dwell round about him, in the ether and the air; then howso oft thou thus wert raised on high, these same things thou shouldst ever see, all things alike, and all things perishing. And where is, then, the glory?”

Men who look out on the world with a gaze thus disenchanted are apt to wrap themselves in a cynical indifference or in a pessimistic despair. But character is stronger than creed; and Marcus carries

into the midst of the saddest surroundings his nature's imperious craving to reverence and to love. He feels, indeed, that the one joy which could have attached him to the world is wholly wanting to him.

"This is the only thing, if anything there be, which could have drawn thee backwards and held thee still in life, if it had been granted thee to live with men of like principles with thyself. But now thou seest how great a pain there is in the discordance of thy life with other men's, so that thou sayest: Come quick, O death! lest perchance I too should forget myself."

Nor can he take comfort from any steadfast hope of future fellowship with kindred souls.

"How can it be that the gods, having ordered all things rightly and with good-will towards men, have overlooked this thing alone: that some men, virtuous indeed, who have as it were made many a covenant with heaven, and through holy deeds and worship have had closest communion with the divine, that these men, when once they are dead, should not live again, but be extinguished for ever? Yet if this be so, be sure that if it ought to have been otherwise the gods would have done it. For were it just, it would also be possible; were it according to nature, nature would have had it so."

For thus he believes without proof and without argument that all is for the best; that everything which happens is for the advantage of every constituent life in nature, since everything is for the advantage of the whole. He will not entertain the idea that the Powers above him may be not all-

powerful ; or the Wisdom which rules the universe less than all-wise. And this optimism comes from no natural buoyancy of temper. There is scarcely a trace in the *Meditations* of any mood of careless joy. He never rises beyond the august contentment of the man who accepts his fate.

“All things are harmonious to me which are harmonious to thee, O Universe. Nothing for me is too early nor too late which is in due time for thee. All is fruit to me which thy seasons, O Nature, bear. From thee are all things, and in thee all, and all return to thee. The poet says, ‘Dear city of Cecrops ;’ shall I not say, ‘Dear city of God ?’”

There have been many who, with no more belief than Marcus in a personal immortality, have striven, like him, to accept willingly the world in which they found themselves placed. But sometimes they have marred the dignity of their position by attempting too eagerly to find a reason for gladness ; they have dwelt with exultation upon a terrene future for our race from which Marcus would still have turned and asked, “Where, then, is the glory ?” It would have seemed to him that a triumphant tone like this can only come from the soilure of philosophy with something of the modern spirit of industrial materialism and facile enjoyment ; he would have preferred that his own sereneness should be less near to complacency than to resignation ; he would still have chosen the temper of that saintly Stoic, whose

rude, strong verses break in with so stern a piety among the fragments of philosophic Greece:—

“Lead, lead Cleanthes, Zeus and holy Fate,
Where'er ye place my post, to serve or wait:
Willing I follow; were it not my will,
A baffled rebel I must follow still.”

These, however, are differences only of tone and temper overlying what forms in reality a vast body of practical agreement. For the scheme of thought and belief which has thus been briefly sketched is not only in itself a noble and a just one. It is a kind of common creed of wise men, from which all other views may well seem mere deflections on the side of an unwarranted credulity or of an exaggerated despair. Here, it may be not unreasonably urged, is the moral backbone of all universal religions; and as civilisation has advanced, the practical creed of all parties, whatever their speculative pretensions, has approximated ever more nearly to these plain principles and uncertain hopes.

This view of the tendency of religious progress is undoubtedly the simplest and most plausible which history presents to the philosopher who is not himself pledged to the defence of any one form of what is termed supernatural belief. But it has to contend with grave difficulties of historical fact; and among these difficulties the age of the Antonines presents one of the most considerable. Never had the ground

been cleared on so large a scale for pure philosophy ; never was there so little external pressure exerted in favour of any traditional faith. The persecutions of the Christians were undertaken on political and moral, rather than on theological grounds ; they were the expression of the feeling with which a modern State might regard a set of men who were at once Mormons and Nihilists—refusing the legal tokens of respect to constituted authorities, while suspected of indulging in low immorality at the bidding of an ignorant superstition. And yet the result of this age of tolerance and enlightenment was the gradual recrudescence, among the cultivated as well as the ignorant, of the belief in a perceptible interaction of the seen and the unseen world, culminating at last in the very form of that belief which had shown itself most resolute, most thorough-going, and most intractable.

For the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire must not be looked upon as an anomalous or an isolated phenomenon. It was rather the triumph along the whole line, though (as is usual in great triumphs) in an unlooked-for fashion, of a current of tendency which had coexisted obscurely with State-religion, patriotism, and philosophy, almost from the first beginnings of the city. The anomaly, if there were one, consisted in the fact that the hints and elements of this new power, which was destined to be the second life of Rome, were to be found, not

in the time-honoured ordinances of her Senate, or the sober wisdom of her schools, but in the fanaticism of ignorant enthusiasts, in the dreams of a mystic poet, in the alleged, but derided, experiences of a few eccentric philosophers. The introduction of Christianity at Rome was the work not only of Peter and Paul, but of Virgil and Varro.

For amidst the various creeds and philosophies, by aid of which men have ordered their life on earth, the most persistent and fundamental line of division is surely this :—The question whether that life is to be ordered by rules drawn from its own experience alone, or whether there are indications which may justly modify our conduct or expectations by some influx of inspiration, or some phenomena testifying to the existence of an unseen world, or to our continued life after the body's decay? The instincts which prompt to this latter view found, as has been already implied, but little sustenance in the established cult of Rome. They were forced to satisfy themselves in a fitful and irregular fashion by Greek and Oriental modes of religious excitement. What sense of elevation or reality may have been present to the partakers in these alien enthusiasms we are not now able to say. The worships of Bacchus and Cybele have been described to us by historians of the same conservative temper as those who afterwards made "an execrable superstition" of the worship of Christ.

Some scattered indications seem to imply a sub-

stratum of religious emotion, or of theurgic experiment, more extensive than the ordinary authorities have cared to record. The proud and gay Catullus rises to his masterpiece in the description of that alternation of reckless fanaticism and sick recoil which formed throughout the so-called Ages of Faith the standing tragedy of the cloister. More startling still is the story which shows us a group of the greatest personages of Rome in the last century before Christ, Nigidius Figulus, Appius Claudius, Publius Vatinius, Marcus Varro, subjected to police supervision on account of their alleged practice of summoning into visible presence the spirits of the dead. "The whole system," says Professor Mommsen, "obtained its consecration—political, religious, and national—from the name of Pythagoras, the ultra-conservative statesman, whose supreme principle was 'to promote order and to check disorder,' the miracle-worker and necromancer, the primeval sage who was a native of Italy, who was interwoven even with the legendary history of Rome, and whose statue was to be seen in the Roman Forum." This story might seem an isolated one but for one remarkable literary parallel. In Virgil—perhaps the only Roman writer who possessed what would now be termed religious originality—we observe the co-existence of three separate lines of religious thought. There is the conservatism which loses no opportunity of enforcing the traditional worships of Rome, in

accordance at once with the poet's own temper of mind, and with the plan of Augustus' ethical reforms. There is the new fusion of the worship of Rome with the worship of the Emperor—the only symbol of spiritual unity between remote provincials and the imperial city. But finally, in the central passage of his greatest poem, we come on a Pythagorean creed, expressed, indeed, with some confusion and hesitancy, but with earnest conviction and power, and forming, as the well-known fragment of correspondence plainly implies, the dominant pre-occupation of the poet's later life.

Such a scheme, indeed, as the Pythagorean, with its insistence on a personal immortality, and its moral retribution adjusted by means of successive existences with a greater nicety than has been employed by any other creed—such a scheme, if once established, might have satisfied the spiritual needs of the Roman world more profoundly and permanently than either the worship of Jove or the worship of Cæsar. But it was not established. The reasoning, or the evidence, which had impressed Virgil, or the group of philosophers, was not set forth before the mass of men; those instincts which we should now term specifically religious remained unguided; and during the next three centuries we observe the love of the marvellous and the supernatural dissociating itself more and more from any ethical dogma. There are, no doubt, remarkable instances in these centuries

of an almost modern spirit of piety associated (as for instance in Apuleius) with the most bizarre religious vagaries. But on the whole the two worships which, until the triumph of Christianity, seemed most likely to overrun the civilised world were the worship of Mithra and the worship of Serapis. Now the name of Mithra can hardly be connected with moral conceptions of any kind. And the nearest that we can get to the character of Serapis is the fact that he was by many persons considered to be identical either with the principle of good or with the principle of evil.

Among these confused and one-sided faiths Christianity had an unique superiority. It was the only formulated and intelligible creed which united the two elements most necessary for a widely-received religion, namely, a lofty moral code, and the attestation of some actual intercourse between the visible and the invisible worlds.

It was not the morality of the Gospels alone which exercised the attractive force. Still less was it the speculations of Pauline theology, the high conceptions which a later age hardened into so immutable a system. It was the fact that this lofty teaching was based on beliefs which almost all men held already; that exhortations, nobler than those of Plutarch or Marcus, were supported by marvels better attested than those of Alexander of Abonoteichos, or Apollonius of Tyana. In a thousand ways, and by a thousand channels, the old faiths

melted into the new. It was not only that such apologists as Justin and Minucius Felix were fond of showing that Christianity was, as it were, the crown of philosophy, the consummation of Platonic truth. More important was the fact that the rank and file of Christian converts looked on the universe with the same eyes as the heathens around them. All that they asked of these was to believe that the dimly-realised deities, whom the heathens regarded rather with fear than love, were in reality powers of evil; while above the Oriental additions so often made to their Pantheon was to be superposed one ultimate divinity, alone beneficent, and alone to be adored.

The hierarchy of an unseen universe must needs be a somewhat shadowy and arbitrary thing. To those, indeed, whose imagination is already exercised on such matters a new scheme of the celestial powers may come with an acceptable sense of increasing insight into the deep things of God. But in one who, like Marcus, has learnt to believe that in such matters the truest wisdom is to recognise that we cannot know, in him a scheme like the Christian is apt to inspire incredulity by its very promise of completeness,—suspicion by the very nature of the evidence which is alleged in its support.

Neither the Stoic school in general, indeed, nor Marcus himself, were clear of all superstitious tendency. The early masters of the sect had pushed their doctrine of the solidarity of all things to the

point of anticipating that the liver of a particular bullock, itself selected from among its fellows by some mysterious fitness of things, might reasonably give an indication of the result of an impending battle. When it was urged that on this principle everything might be expected to be indicative of everything else, the Stoics answered that so it was, but that only when such indications lay in the liver could we understand them aright. When asked how we came to understand them when thus located, the Stoic doctors seem to have made no sufficient reply. We need not suppose that Marcus participated in absurdities like these. He himself makes no assertion of this hazardous kind, except only that remedies for his ailments "have been shown to him in dreams." And this is not insisted on in detail; it rather forms part of that habitual feeling or impression which, if indeed it be superstitious, is yet a superstition from which no devout mind, perhaps, was ever wholly free; namely, that he is the object of a special care and benevolence proceeding from some holy power. Such a feeling implies no belief either in merit or in privilege beyond that of other men; but just as the man who is strongly willing, though it be proved to him that his choice is determined by his antecedents, must yet feel assured that he can deflect its issue this way or that, even so a man, the habit of whose soul is worship, cannot but see at least a reflection of his own virtue

in the arch of heaven, and bathe his spirit in the mirage projected from the well-spring of its own love.

For such an instinct, for all the highest instincts of his heart, Marcus would no doubt have found in Christianity a new and full satisfaction. The question, however, whether he ought to have become a Christian is not worth serious discussion. In the then state of belief in the Roman world it would have been as impossible for a Roman Emperor to become a Christian as it would be at the present day for a Czar of Russia to become a Buddhist. Some Christian apologists complain that Marcus was not converted by the miracle of the "Thundering Legion." They forget that though some obscure persons may have ascribed that happy occurrence to Christian prayers, the Emperor was assured on much higher authority that he had performed the miracle himself. Marcus, indeed, would assuredly not have insisted on his own divinity. He would not have been deterred by any Stoic exclusiveness from incorporating in his scheme of belief, already infiltrated with Platonic thought, such elements as those apologists who start from St. Paul's speech at Athens would have urged him to introduce. But an acceptance of the new faith involved much more than this. It involved tenets which might well seem to be a mere reversion to the world-old superstitions and sorceries of barbarous tribes. Such alleged phenomena as those of possession, inspiration, healing by

imposition of hands, luminous appearances, modification and movement of material objects, formed, not, as some later apologists would have it, a mere accidental admixture, but an essential and loudly-asserted element in the new religion. The apparition of its Founder after death was its very *raison d'être* and triumphant demonstration. The Christian advocate may say indeed with reason, that phenomena such as these, however suspicious the associations which they might invoke, however primitive the stratum of belief to which they might seem at first to degrade the disciple, should nevertheless have been examined afresh on their own evidence, and would have been found to be supported by a consensus of testimony which has since then overcome the world. Addressed to an age in which Reason was supreme, such arguments might have carried convincing weight. But mankind had certainly not reached a point in the age of the Antonines,—if indeed we have reached it yet,—at which the recollections of barbarism were cast into so remote a background that the leaders of civilised thought could lightly reopen questions the closing of which might seem to have marked a clear advance along the path of enlightenment. It is true, indeed, that the path of enlightenment is not a royal road but a labyrinth; and that those who have marched too unhesitatingly in one direction have generally been obliged to retrace their steps, to unravel some for-

gotten clue, to explore some turning which they had already passed by. But the practical rulers of men must not take the paths which seem to point backwards until they hear in front of them the call of those who have chosen that less inviting way.

An emperor who had "learnt from Diognetus not to give credit to what is said by miracle-workers and jugglers about incantations and the driving away of demons and such things," might well feel that so much as to inquire into the Gospel stories would be a blasphemy against his philosophic creed. Even the heroism of Christian martyrdom left him cold. In words which have become proverbial as a wise man's mistake, he stigmatises the Christian contempt of death as "sheer party spirit." And yet—it is an old thought, but it is impossible not to recur to it once more—what might he not have learnt from these despised sectaries! the melancholy Emperor from Potheinus and Blandina, smiling on the rack!

Of the Christian virtues, it was not *faith* which was lacking to him. His faith indeed was not that bastard faith of theologians, which is nothing more than a willingness to assent to historical propositions on insufficient evidence. But it was faith such as Christ demanded of His disciples, the steadfastness of the soul in clinging, spite of doubts, of difficulties, even of despair, to whatever she has known of best; the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis. To Marcus the alternative of "gods or

atoms"—of a universe ruled either by blind chance or by an intelligent Providence—was ever present and ever unsolved; but in action he ignored that dark possibility, and lived as a member of a sacred cosmos, and co-operant with ordering gods.

Again, it might seem unjust to say that he was wanting in love. No one has expressed with more conviction the interdependence and kinship of men.

"We are made to work together, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth." "It is peculiar to man to love even those who do wrong; and thou wilt love them if, when they err, thou bethink thee that they are to thee near akin." "Men exist for the sake of one another; teach them then, or bear with them." "When men blame thee, or hate thee, or revile thee, pass inward to their souls; see what they are. Thou wilt see that thou needst not trouble thyself as to what such men think of thee. And thou must be kindly affectioned to them; for by nature they are friends; and the gods, too, help and answer them in many ways." "Love men, and love them from the heart." "'Earth loves the shower,' and 'sacred æther loves;' and the whole universe loves the making of that which is to be. I say then to the universe: Even I, too, love as thou."

And yet about the love of a John, a Paul, a Peter, there is the ring of a note which is missing here. Stoic love is but an injunction of reason and a means to virtue; Christian love is the open secret of the universe, and in itself the end of all. In all that wisdom can teach herein, Stoic and Christian

are at one. They both know that if a man would save his life he must lose it; that the disappearance of all selfish aims or pleasures in the universal life is the only pathway to peace. All religions that are worth the name have felt the need of this inward change; the difference lies rather in the light under which they regard it. To the Stoic in the West, as to the Buddhist in the East, it presented itself as a renunciation which became a deliverance, a tranquillity which passed into an annihilation. The Christian, too, recognised in the renunciation of the world a deliverance from its evil. But his spirit in those early days was occupied less with what he was resigning than with what he gained; the love of Christ constrained him; he died to self to find, even here on earth, that he had passed not into nothingness, but into heaven. In his eyes the Stoic doctrine was not false, but partly rudimentary and partly needless. His only objection, if objection it could be called, to the Stoic manner of facing the reality of the universe, was that the reality of the universe was so infinitely better than the Stoic supposed.

If, then, the Stoic love beside the Christian was "as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine," it was not only because the Stoic philosophy prescribed the curbing and checking of those natural emotions which Christianity at once guided and intensified by her new ideal. It was because the love

of Christ which the Christian felt was not a laborious duty, but a self-renewing, self-intensifying force; a feeling offered as to one who for ever responded to it, as to one whose triumphant immortality had brought his disciples' immortality to light.

So completely had the appearance of Jesus to the faithful after his apparent death altered in their eyes the aspect of the world. So decisive was the settlement of the old alternative, "Either Providence or atoms," which was effected by the firm conviction of a single spirit's beneficent return along that silent and shadowy way. So powerful a reinforcement to Faith and Love was afforded by the third of the Christian trinity of virtues—by the grace of Hope.

But we are treading here on controverted ground. It is not only that this great prospect has not yet taken its place among admitted certainties; that the hope and resurrection of the dead are still called in question. Much more than this; the most advanced school of modern moralists tends rather to deny that "a sure and certain hope" in this matter is to be desired at all. Virtue, it is alleged, must needs lose her disinterestedness if the solution of the great problem were opened to her gaze.

"Pour nous," says M. Renan, who draws this moral especially from the noble disinterestedness of Marcus himself: "pour nous, on nous annoncerait un argument péremptoire en ce genre, que nous ferions comme Saint

Louis, quand on lui parla de l'hostie miraculeuse ; nous refuserions d'aller voir. Qu'avons nous besoin de ces preuves brutales, qui n'ont d'application que dans l'ordre grossier des faits, et qui gêneraient notre liberté ?”

This seems a strong argument ; and if it be accepted it is practically decisive of the question at issue,—I do not say only between Stoicism and Christianity, but between all those systems which do not seek, and those which do seek, a spiritual communion for man external to his own soul, a spiritual continuance external to his own body. If a proof of a beneficent Providence or of a future life be a thing to be deprecated, it will be indiscreet, or even immoral, to inquire whether such proof has been, or can be, obtained. The world must stand with Marcus ; and there will be no extravagance in M. Renan's estimate of the Stoic morality as a sounder and more permanent system than that of Jesus Himself.

But generalisations like this demand a close examination. Is the antithesis between interested and disinterested virtue a clear and fundamental one for all stages of spiritual progress ? Or may we not find that the conditions of the experiment vary, as it were, as virtue passes through different temperatures ; that our formula gives a positive result at one point, a negative at another, and becomes altogether unmeaning at a third ?

It will be allowed, in the first place, that for an

indefinite time to come, and until the mass of mankind has advanced much higher above the savage level than is as yet the case, it will be premature to be too fastidious as to the beliefs which prompt them to virtue. The first object is to give them habits of self-restraint and well-doing, and we may be well content if their crude notions of an unseen Power are such as to reinforce the somewhat obscure indications which life on earth at present affords that honesty and truth and mercy bring a real reward to men. But let us pass on to the extreme hypothesis on which the repudiation of any spiritual help for man outside himself must ultimately rest. Let us suppose that man's impulses have become harmonised with his environment; that his tendency to anger has been minimised by long-standing gentleness; his tendency to covetousness by diffused well-being; his tendency to sensuality by the increased preponderance of his intellectual nature. How will the test of his disinterestedness operate then? Why, it will be no more possible then for a sane man to be deliberately wicked than it is possible now for a civilised man to be deliberately filthy in his personal habits. We do not wish now that it were uncertain whether filth were unhealthy in order that we might be the more meritorious in preferring to be clean. And whether our remote descendants have become convinced of the reality of a future life or no, it will assuredly never occur

to them that, without it, there might be a question whether virtue was a remunerative object of pursuit. Lapses from virtue there may still be in plenty; but inherited instinct will have made it inconceivable that a man should voluntarily be what Marcus calls a "boil or imposthume upon the universe," an island of selfishness in the mid-sea of sympathetic joy.

It is true, indeed, that in the present age, and for certain individuals, that choice of which M. Renan speaks has a terrible, a priceless reality. Many a living memory records some crisis when one who had rejected as unproved the traditional sanctions was forced to face the question whether his virtue had any sanction which still could stand; some night when the foundations of the soul's deep were broken up, and she asked herself why she still should cleave to the law of other men rather than to some kindlier monition of her own:—

"Doch alles was dazu mich trieb,
Gott, war so gut! ach, war so lieb!"

To be the conqueror in such a contest is the characteristic privilege of a time of transition like our own. But it is not the only, nor even the highest conceivable, form of virtue. It is an incident in the moral life of the individual; its possibility may be but an incident in the moral life of the race. It is but driving the enemy off the ground

on which we wish to build our temple ; there may be far greater trials of strength, endurance, courage, before we have raised its dome in air.

For after all it is only in the lower stages of ethical progress that to see the right is easy and to decide on doing it is hard. The time comes when it is not so much conviction of the desirability of virtue that is needed, as enlightenment to perceive where virtue's upward pathway lies ; not so much the direction of the will which needs to be controlled, as its force and energy which need to be ever vivified and renewed. It is then that the moralist must needs welcome any influence, if such there be, which can pour into man's narrow vessel some overflowing of an infinite Power. It is then, too, that he will learn to perceive that the promise of a future existence might well be a source of potent stimulus rather than of enervating peace. For if we are to judge of the reward of virtue hereafter by the rewards which we see her achieving here, it is manifest that the only reward which always attends her is herself ; that the only prize which is infallibly gained by performing one duty well is the power of performing yet another ; the only recompense for an exalted self-forgetfulness is that a man forgets himself always more. Or rather, the only other reward is one whose sweetness also is scarcely realisable till it is attained ; it is the love of kindred souls ; but a love which recedes

ever farther from the flatteries and indulgences which most men desire, and tends rather to become the intimate comradeship of spirits that strive towards the same goal.

Why then should those who would imagine an eternal reward for virtue imagine her as eternally rewarded in any other way? And what need there be in a spiritual law like this to relax any soul's exertion, to encourage any low content? By an unfailing physical law we know that the athlete attains through painful effort that alacrity and soundness which are the health of the body. And if there were an unfailing spiritual law by which the philosopher might attain, and ever attain increasingly, through strenuous virtue, that energy and self-devotedness which are the health of the soul, would there be anything in the one law or in the other to encourage either the physical or the spiritual voluptuary—the self-indulgence either of the banquet-hall or of the cloister? There would be no need to test men by throwing an artificial uncertainty round the operation of such laws as these; it would be enough if they could desire what was offered to them; the ideal would become the probation.

To some minds reflections like these, rather than like M. Renan's, will be suggested by the story of Marcus, of his almost unmingled sadness, his almost stainless virtue. All will join, indeed, in admira-

tion for a life so free from every unworthy, every dubious incitement to well-doing. But on comparing this life with the lives of men for whom the great French critic's sympathy is so much less—such men, for instance, as St. Paul—we may surely feel that if the universe be in reality so much better than Marcus supposed, it would have done him good, not harm, to have known it; that it would have kindled his wisdom to a fervent glow, such as the world can hardly hope to see, till, if ever it be so, the dicta of science and the promises of religion are at one; till saints are necessarily philosophers, and philosophers saints. And yet, whatever inspiring secrets the future may hold, the lover of humanity can never regret that Marcus knew but what he knew. Whatever winds of the spirit may sweep over the sea of souls, the life of Marcus will remain for ever as the normal high-water mark of the unassisted virtue of man. No one has shown more simply or more completely what man at any rate must do and be. No one has ever earned the right to say to himself with a more tranquil assurance—in the words which close the *Meditations*—“Depart thou then contented, for he that releaseth thee is content.”

MODERN ESSAYS



GIUSEPPE MAZZINI.

“Fuss’ io pur lui! C’ a tal fortuna nato
Per l’ aspro esilio suo, con la virtute,
Dare’ del mondo il più felice stato.”

MICHAEL ANGELO.

THE Risorgimento, or Resurrection of Italy, one of the noblest themes which our century has offered, still awaits the philosophic historian. The writings of the friends or disciples of one or other of the three leading characters in the great drama introduce the reader into a world of contradictions more befitting a solar myth than a serious history. Grave biographies have been written of Cavour as the regenerator of Italy, in which Mazzini is mentioned only with an incidental sneer. Noble poems¹ have been dedicated to Mazzini as the regenerator of Italy, in which Cavour is not mentioned at all. And there is a whole Garibaldian literature in which Mazzini stands quite in the background, while Cavour plays indeed a prominent part, only he is no longer the hero but the villain of the tale.

¹ For example, Mr. Swinburne's magnificent *Song of Italy* and *Super Flumina Babylonis*, and the pathetic poems called *The Disciples*, by Mrs. Hamilton King.

I propose to attempt a less one-sided estimate of the least conspicuous but not the least interesting of the three—a man who may be said to have been at once more known and more unknown than almost any man in Europe, whose designs were discussed in every Cabinet, and his words welcomed in every “upper room” of political or religious reformers on the Continent, while at the same time his writings and himself were proscribed in every country except our own, and he lived in lodgings of which not a dozen persons knew the address.

Giuseppe Mazzini, son of a professor of anatomy, was born in Genoa in 1805, and died at Pisa in 1872.

The years in which he grew up to know Italy were among the most perplexing and desperate of her long decline. The year 1700 has been sometimes fixed as the darkest moment of her second night—the night between the Renaissance and the Risorgimento—but such revival as had come since then had consisted rather in a wakening consciousness of her shame than in any effort to remove it. A few figures appear amid the gloom—figures, some of them, which we may take as typical of the three aspects of ruined Italy—her unabashed sensualism, her rebellious passion, her vanishing and mournful soul. We see Casanova, the gaudy flower of decay, conciliating by the intensity of his corruption tyranny itself, and flaunting through Europe his triumphant charlatanism and his greedy amours. We see Alfieri—his republicanism strangely

complicated by an intercurrent passion for high-born dames—making of his whole strong life a kind of tragic protest and declamation, living melodrama and thinking in heroics. And we see Leopardi wandering unrestingly among “the arches and deserted towers,” appealing for a visionary sympathy to an impalpable mistress, for a visionary honour to an unassembled host of war, till “not the last *hope* only of beloved illusions, but the last *desire*, had flown.”

The “last illusion” in the sphere of politics which Italy underwent was the French invasion of 1796. For a time the word *Francese* was used by ardent Italians as synonymous with patriot. But unfortunately the armies of the French Revolution were admirable only till they were successful; and it has been remarked that the proclamation in which Napoleon held out Italy to his troops, not as a nation to deliver, but as a prey to seize, marked the first step in the metamorphosis of the soldiers of the Republic into the soldiers of the Empire. The French yoke was thrown off for a few years, but Austria was an equally brutal master. Napoleon’s second rule, after Marengo, with its juster codes, its sounder finance, its public works and education, seemed at first a relief; but under Napoleon good government itself became the instrument of tyranny, and his equalising institutions served but to level all pre-existing rights beneath a single will. And he was not content with exacting money or pictures—he needed men. Thirty thousand Italians

were carried off to Spain, forty thousand to Russia. Piedmont, Genoa, Tuscany, Rome itself, were annexed to the French Empire. Italy was not even the subject of France, but her slave.

Napoleon fell; Austria again overran Lombardy; the petty princes returned. Murat from Naples made a vain attempt to unite Italy under himself; then he too fell, and Naples was restored to Bourbon rule. The Congress of Vienna, ignoring nationality or national wishes, and preoccupied with a system of guarantees against France, confirmed Austria in the possession of Lombardy and Venice, and gave her, through her archdukes, a preponderating influence in Central Italy. The statesmanship of the Congress of Vienna belongs to a past era, both of politics and of humanity; but it must be noted that no counter-propositions were urged with authority, no powerful voice from Italy protested against the restoration of these foreign masters, and the common people, who still were strongly Catholic, received with satisfaction the return of princes and pope.

The restored rulers brought with them all the errors of restorations in a form at once exaggerated and paltry. A Bourbon on the throne of France carries with him a historic majesty to which much that is not royal may be forgiven, but it was hard for Modena or Parma to idealise the petty poltrooneries of a grand duke, or the gallantries of a dowager empress. There is no need to repeat the long indictment against the rulers of Italy. While liberal tongues were still

being torn out with pincers in Rome,—while innocent women were still being flogged in batches through the streets of Milan,—while, in the dungeons of Naples, the “cap of silence” was still being pressed on the head of any man who showed himself more than a slave,—no words were too strong to use ; but as things are now, we may be content with noticing how surely from each of these powers has been exacted the penalty of a false position. Austria, once the favourite, as it were, of unjust Fates, the “felix Austria” of a theory of territorial aggrandisement which ignored all rights but those of kings, has suffered more severely than any nation in Europe from the crumbling of errors which she shared with them all, and scarcely knows even yet how far she must contract her imperial structure before she can find it founded on the rock. The Papacy itself is learning to regret the worldly ambition which confounded the things of God and Cæsar and added a perishable coronet to the triple crown. And in Naples the irony of fate has been yet more personal and bitter. Seldom was so grotesque a sport of fortune as that which gave the absolute rule over millions of lives to “Bomba” and his kin. And seldom, as Plato would say, have the souls of slaves been laid bare so shamefully from beneath the vesture of a great king.

It was in Naples, in 1820, that the long series of revolutions began. This first insurrection founded a type which became common to many Neapolitan insurrections. The people demanded a constitution and

marched on Naples. The king's troops ran away. The king granted a constitution, and swore on the crucifix that he would be true to it, invoking the instant vengeance of God if he had a lie in his heart. The Austrians marched on Naples. The parliamentary troops ran away. The king tore up the constitution and hung whom he chose.

This revolution aimed at internal reform,—always the most urgent preoccupation of Neapolitan patriots. But in 1821 an insurrection broke out in Piedmont, having for its object not merely the grant of a constitution to Piedmont, but the liberation of Lombardy from Austrian rule. Betrayed by Prince Charles Albert, this rising collapsed for want of leaders, and Austria was harsher than before. Ten years later the French revolution of 1830 spread excitement through Italy. Risings in Bologna, Parma, and Modena, revealed the same lack of leaders and of programme, and were repressed by Austrian intervention. These failures made the cause of Italian liberties seem more hopeless than ever. It was plain that there was no organising bond of union, no leader, no definite plan or idea round which the lovers of Italy could rally; while Austria was always on the watch to resent not only overt revolts against herself, but even constitutional reforms in the other Italian States. Ruling by right of conquest, she chose that the smaller princes, who were in effect her vassals, should keep the liberties of their subjects down to the same level.

In one direction only was there any sign of hope. The educated class was beginning to recover from the confusion and stupor produced by the French invasions, and to interest itself in patriotic causes. In Tuscany especially a literary movement began—cautious and tentative, but important as accustoming men to speak, and giving them some reason to trust and respect each other. Science, agriculture,—every pursuit, from astronomy to whist, which can unite mankind—was soon used for the same end, and professors or land-owners meeting from different parts of Italy learned to feel that they had a common country. In their various discussions the question really at issue was never mentioned, but never forgotten.

But means like these could scarcely reach the mass of the people. A more outspoken influence, a new moral force, was needed, and when Charles Albert succeeded to the throne of Piedmont in 1831, a *Letter to the King, by an Italian*, showed that the new force was there. “The people,” said this stirring appeal, “are no longer to be quieted by a few concessions. They seek the recognition of those rights of humanity which have been withheld from them for ages. They demand laws and liberty, independence and union. Divided, dismembered, and oppressed, they have neither name nor country. They have heard themselves stigmatised by the foreigner as a helot nation. They have seen free men visit their country and declare it the land of the dead. They have

drained the cup of slavery to the dregs, but they have sworn never to fill it again."

The letter pointed out to the king how, by appealing to the whole of Italy, he might unite her people in the struggle for independence. "There is a crown brighter and nobler than that of Piedmont—a crown that only awaits a man bold enough to conceive the idea of wearing it, resolute and determined enough to consecrate himself wholly to the realisation of that idea, and virtuous enough not to dim its splendour with ignoble tyranny." This letter, written at the age of twenty-six, was the first manifesto of principles which Mazzini afterwards more fully expressed, but which he retained unchanged through life. The problem with which he had to deal was a complex one. How were moral and political unity and strength to be won for Italy, partitioned as she was between Austria and semi-Austrian princes, and morally divided into the ultramontane and materialist camps? A brief statement of his political creed, elicited from his various writings, will show to what extent he was at first alone in the views which he held, and to what extent he was in unison with other patriots. His programme, then, reduced to its simplest expression, may be stated as follows:—

- (1) First of all the Austrians must be driven out of Italy.
- (2) This must be attempted at once, and constantly.
- (3) All Italy must unite into one nation.

(4) The form of her government must then be submitted to her deliberate choice.

(5) A republican government must be recommended to her by fair argument.

(6) It is useless to expect help from Catholicism in regenerating Italy.

(7) A purer religion must be preached from Rome; and Rome must once more assume the moral leadership of the world.

(1) The first of these propositions was controverted by some of the best men in Italy—for instance, by Romagnosi, Ricasoli, and Mayer. They held that internal reforms should first be achieved, and that then Austria, whom it was impossible to dislodge, would soften her rule as well. Had Austria taken advantage of this suggestion she might possibly have kept Lombardy and Venice to this day, or at least have sold them to Italy without war. If Francis II. had not flogged so many innocent women through Milan and Verona, if he had not chained so many innocent men to the walls of the Spielberg, and fed them on bread and tallow, Europe might long have looked coldly on Italian claims to independence. But he showed plainly that he preferred to rule Lombardy as a conquered country, and, moreover, that he would allow no changes in the neighbouring Italian States. Men who saw Radetzky making it the regular business of his life to put down revolutions could not long deny that

the expulsion of the Austrians was the prerequisite of all other reform.

(2) The second point was much more controvertible. The great mass of patriotic Italians, not only the Moderates but the Carbonari, believed that Italy ought to wait for the chapter of accidents, that the expulsion of the Austrians was more than she could manage alone. They pointed to the failures of 1821 and 1831, afterwards to the failure of Mazzini's expedition into Savoy in 1834, and said that it was cruel to lead men on to perish when there was no hope. Among the many men who bitterly blamed Mazzini on this ground one name only need be mentioned, that of Cavour. But in the way in which Cavour treated this accusation may be found the key to its true meaning. Cavour's object, though perfectly patriotic, was patriotic in a different sense from Mazzini's. He wished to liberate Lombardy and Venetia, and to add them, and the small States of the North of Italy, to the Sardinian kingdom. He did not wish to touch Rome or Naples, nor to see Lombardo-Venetia liberated to the profit of a republic. He was, in short, a Piedmontese patriot before he was an Italian patriot. His first object, therefore, was to acquire for Piedmont such a reputation that all that was gained from Austria might fall into her grasp. He wished to make her known as a model constitutional monarchy, equally aloof from Austrian despotism and from republican anarchy. In this plan he completely succeeded. He added its

finishing touch by despatching Piedmontese troops to the Crimea, where his was not the only government which sought and found a needed advertisement. And when he met the representatives of the Great Powers on equal terms at the Congress of Paris it was felt that his tone on Italian matters was greatly changed. Till then he had always spoken with horror and contempt of the isolated outbreaks of the revolutionary spirit, and had begged that Piedmont might not on their account forfeit the sympathy of the Powers. But now, in that famous note to which the Austrian plenipotentiary refused to reply, he vehemently alleged those constant and irrepressible uprisings as a proof of the intolerable character of Austrian, Papal, and Neapolitan rule. It was then that the opinion of Europe—Count Walewski speaking for France, and Lord Clarendon for England—ranged itself definitely on the side of Italian freedom; the Austrian occupation was admitted to be an abnormal, therefore a transitory thing, and the Pope and the King of Naples received hints to set their houses in order, which it was their own fault if they ignored. It was seen by all, as it had, no doubt, been seen by Cavour all along, that the conduct which gains sympathy for oppressed peoples is neither tame endurance nor empty declamation, but heroic, even if unavailing, courage. For the success of Cavour's projects it was as necessary that the people of Lombardy, Parma, Modena, should show this courage, as that Piedmont should show herself fitted by consti-

tutionalism and good order to reap the harvest of which the blood of "Young Italy" had been the seed.

We cannot doubt, then, that these recurrent revolutions were of service to Italy, even if her independence was to be ultimately attained on Cavour's plan—by awaiting a series of happy conjunctures and alliances with other Powers. But to defend Mazzini's policy thus would be to shirk his main issue; for he did *not* wish to call in the help of other nations—he did not intend his risings simply as demonstrations, but as a mode of warfare which, if persisted in, would gradually make the Austrian position untenable. No one can say with certainty how this plan would have worked if it had not been superseded by Cavour's. But what is doubtful is not so much the feasibility of the plan in itself, if the Italians acted up to it, as the possibility of eliciting from them as much heroism and patience as the plan required. If all Italy had made common cause with Lombardy and Venetia, if each of her cities had fought like the Romans under Mazzini, or the Venetians under Manin, if there had been twenty such guerrilla bands as that "thousand" with which Garibaldi conquered a kingdom, Austria could not have held her ground for long. The disparity between her strength and that of Italy was after all by no means overwhelming, and to occupy a mountainous and bitterly hostile country needs overwhelming force. The intervention of foreign powers might have complicated the problem, but if, as Mazzini wished, the war had been

conducted with strict respect for Catholicism, and the question of form of government deferred for the consideration of United Italy, foreign powers, in the growing coldness with which the treaties of Vienna were regarded, would have had no adequate reason to interfere. Still, they *might* have interfered; the spirit of Italy might have given way, and her freedom might have been deferred for generations. On Mazzini's, as on Cavour's plan, there was a chance of failure; and Mazzini's plan was sure to cost more blood, though it might gain more Italian territory than Cavour's. Our preference for one or the other plan will, in fact, depend upon the objects for which we desire the existence of Italy as a nation. If we care mainly for her material prosperity and peace, for the "white flocks of Clitumnus," for the "heavy-hanging harvests and Bacchus in his Massic flow," we may feel that Cavour led Italy along her surest way. But if we desire first of all that the "Saturnian land" should once again be the mighty mother not only of fruits but of heroes, if self-respect and constancy seem to us things worth purchase at the cost of any pain, then we may feel that it had been better for her if "fire-breathing bulls had ploughed the soil and dragon's teeth been sown, and helm and javelin had bristled in a crop of men."

"Italy will never live," said Emilio Bandiera, "till Italians have learnt to die." No word need be uttered in disparagement of a people to which the whole world wishes well, which men of so many nations have loved

the next to their own. But are not the best Italians themselves the first to say that their redemption has been too often received as a gift from others instead of being worked out by themselves? that there might be something more of nobility, distinction, power, in Italy's bearing among the nations now, if she had felt within her more of the spirit of that other people of the past, who (in Thucydides' words) "dared beyond their strength, and hazarded against their judgment, and in extremities were of an excellent hope"?

(3) "All Italy must unite into one nation." Now that all Italian soil (except Nice, Corsica, and the Trentino) is, in fact, united under one government, this proposition needs no defence. It is plain that there was no reason for leaving out any part of Italy, and that her independence and progress depend in even an exceptional degree on her status as a great power. She has a danger which other powers have not; she has to face the Ultramontanism of the world.

And, in fact, no exclusion of any integral part of Italy, of Rome or Naples, could have been long maintained. The history of the struggle shows that the resolution to achieve Italian unity was the one strong popular feeling on which either republicans or monarchists could count. This was a surprise to both parties; for the lesson of combination and self-restraint was one which it had seemed that no suffering could teach to Italy. When, after the internecine struggles of her republics, she sank into her second night, she

was still passionately attached to small civic units and to the very extravagance of self-government. But when her new day dawned she was found to be bent above all things on national unity, and so indifferent to her form of government, that this was decided almost wholly by Cavour's genius and by the accident of Garibaldi's admiration for the personal courage of Victor Emmanuel. Garibaldi was a more typical national hero than either Mazzini or Cavour, and his eagerness to seize on Naples for Italy, with his grotesque perplexity as to what to do with it when he had got it, represents well enough the national ardour for union, and the national irresolution as to anything beyond.

But, however necessary the union of the whole of Italy may seem to us now, Mazzini at first was almost alone in preaching it. In 1831, and for long after, alliances between the princes, the formation of three Italian States, or an Amphictyonic council under the presidency of the Pope, were the alternatives most often urged. It was an alliance of constitutional States that was desired by Cesare Balbo, Romagnosi, Massimo d'Azeglio. It was an alliance of aristocratical States that was the ideal of Alfieri, Gioberti, Botta. And even so late as 1859 it was the extension of the Sardinian kingdom over North Italy which was the limit of the aspirations of Cavour.

But in this case also Mazzini's programme was based not only on political foresight, but on what was

to him a religious principle. The principle of nationalities was one which he deduced directly from his conception of the moral universe. The nation, he said, is within humanity what the family is within the nation—a divinely-constituted group with a special mission of its own, to be pursued independently, though in association with the groups around it. To break up a nationality—a group set apart by race and tongue—was to deny to it the only right which an individual or a society can possess, the right of developing itself freely along its appointed path. And much of his energy was spent in insisting on this view; not in the case of Italy alone, but on behalf of the Greeks, the Belgians, the Slavs, the Roumanians, the Magyars. The principle, as these names suggest to us, is a hard one to apply. It is subject, perhaps, to more limitations than Mazzini supposed. But no one can deny him the credit of having been its first systematic, persistent, and influential supporter. And it is a commonplace to remark that in the history of the last half century in Europe the principle of nationalities has been superseding the old system of territorial compensations and dynastic claims as irresistibly as the Natural system of botany has superseded that of Linnæus.

(4) The next point in Mazzini's programme—that united Italy should be left to choose her own government—seems plainly just. In his view each party and province ought to help every other in the attainment of the common end, but without pledging any

ally to the acceptance of its own scheme of rule. On two occasions Mazzini was strongly urged, from opposite quarters, to give way on this point. In 1848 Charles Albert, fighting against Austria in alliance with revolted Lombardy, wished to enrol all Lombard and other volunteers in his own army. His obvious preference of Piedmontese to Italian interests had in other ways much injured the movement, and this proposal had the effect of greatly checking the influx of soldiers. Mazzini stood out, and the Lombard volunteers were incorporated in regiments of their own, though officered by Piedmontese. He thus protested, not against the union of Italy under a king, but against a king's assumption of a right to rule over Italy, made in a manner which lessened the chances of Italian union.

The other occasion when his firmness in this matter was tested was when he spoke to Italy in the name of the Republic of Rome. Men whose hopes, like his own, were fixed on a Republic of Italy urged him to use the unique opportunity to found at least in title the unique ideal. But he refused to prejudge in any way the decision of the rest of the country, and in his brief hour of triumph he did not derogate from the principles of his long defeat.

(5) The next article of his belief is far more open to debate. The question whether a monarchy or a republic is indicated by history as the government best fitted for a united Italy, may be plausibly argued

on both sides. If we consider Italy simply as one of the provinces of the dismembered Roman empire, analogy is in favour of monarchy. Speaking generally, each of the principal provinces of that empire associated its fortunes sooner or later with some family of Germanic princes, and the hereditary succession of these princes served as a nucleus for the newly-formed State. The prince's power was from the first limited by the rights of minor chieftains and heads of families, and from these limitations the civil liberties of Europe sprang. Italy alone rejected consolidation under a northern prince; she refused the hereditary dominion of a Gothic or Lombard family; she preferred an anarchic liberty modified by external Powers, whose indefinite pretensions she vaguely admitted, and whose incursions her factions or her patriotism alternately invited and repelled. This system of municipal self-government broke down, and Italy was parcelled out under foreign rulers, identified not with her interests, but with the interest of the reigning families of other countries. It might seem, therefore, that the surest way of guaranteeing the continued existence of a united Italy would be simply to replace her in the road which she should never have quitted—to identify her with the fortunes of some family of northern origin, and to trust that the stability and progressive constitutionalism which had on the whole followed on such a course in France, Austria, England, Spain, and Portugal, might result in Italy as well. In the

latest instance of the revival of a nation of Southern Europe this plan was tried : Greece was placed under a northern family ; and, if the experiment has not been fully successful, there has at least been no sign that a republic, or a federation of republics, would have answered even as well.

The house of Savoy fulfilled the necessary conditions ; and there was a kind of historic propriety in giving the leadership of Italy to Piedmont, the province of Italy as yet least distinguished in history. Even so had each plain and promontory of Greece in turn held the hearthfire of her national existence ; in each in turn that fire burnt low ; and her last renewal came to her from the unexhausted byways of her people, from villages unnoticed by Thucydides, and goat-pasturing islets almost unnamed amid the sea. These, in one view, are the analogies of history, and these analogies history has confirmed. Italy has been remade into a nation in the easiest way.

Few historical problems, however, are so simple as to admit of only one solution by analogy, and the same broad facts of Italian history may be read into a very different meaning. We miss, it may be said, the very lesson which the exceptional character of Italy's history should teach us if we attempt to force her destinies into the vulgar mould. At a time when monarchy was essential to the very existence of other States she refused monarchy—refused it on account of her excess, not her defect, of national life ;—because

the patriotism of her sons lies in devotion to a country and not to a king; because each group of Italian men and women, each sacred shrine and hill, was enough to give scope to all human faculties, to form a centre of heroism, art, and love. Meantime other nations grew strong by their very subjection, by the want of individuality in their units, by the joyless discipline which made the State a machine of war. Then came the time when small States could exist no longer, and the Italian communities were delivered over to northern tyrants. But now that Italy was to rise again, she ought surely to retain her old strength while avoiding her old weakness. Her strength was in her democracy, in the vivid sense of participation in the national life which animated the least of her citizens. Representative government,—unknown to the ancient or the mediæval world,—makes possible the existence of large republics with all the institutions of local freedom, and without the perils of federation. It is in this direction that the civilised world tends. Even the old monarchical States of Europe are being republicanised now. The only great new State which the modern age has produced is the republic of North America. If Italy is to head the world she must range herself on the winning side.

Balanced in this way, the argument leaves much to the bias of individual minds. And it was not in reality from a comparison of historical analogies that Mazzini was a republican. It was because “to the

unhappy he felt himself near of kin," because his sympathies moved most readily with the hopes of the masses, and the upward struggles of toiling men.

In men who have risen to wide-reaching power we generally observe an early preponderance of one of two instincts—the instinct of rule and order, or the instinct of sympathy. The one instinct may degenerate into bureaucracy, the other into sentimentalism. Rightly ordered, they make the master or the leader of men.

The earliest anecdotes told of Cavour and Mazzini will illustrate my meaning. When Cavour was about six years old he was taken on a posting journey. On one stage of this journey the horses were unusually bad. The little boy asked who was responsible for the horses. He was told it was the postmaster. He asked who appointed the postmaster. He was told it was the syndic. He demanded to be taken at once to the syndic to get the postmaster dismissed.

Mazzini as a child was very delicate. When he was about six years old he was taken for his first walk. For the first time he saw a beggar, a venerable old man. He stood transfixed, then broke from his mother, threw his arms round the beggar's neck and kissed him, crying, "Give him something, mother, give him something." "Love him well, lady," said the aged man; "he is one who will love the people."

The tendency of recent thought has been to dwell rather upon the hierarchy than upon the unity of

mankind. And as the race develops, the difference between man and man, already vast, may perhaps grow not less, but greater. We can place no limit to the ascendancy which may be exercised by the mere intellect of some epoch-making man. But we may safely prophesy that no one will ever uplift his fellow-men from within, or leave a name which draws tears of reverence from generations yet unborn, who has not himself, as it were, wept over Jerusalem, and felt a stirring kinship with even the outcast of mankind.

"God and the People," Mazzini's watchword, was no mere phrase to him. It represented the two streams of adoring and of compassionate sympathy which make a double current in the generous heart, unless fate sends an object around which both can flow, and mingles either effluence in a single love.

There is, indeed, no reason whatever why God's worship or the people's welfare should be bound up with a republican form of government. The danger of modern societies comes from plutocracies rather than from kings or nobles; and against the power of money republics offer no safeguard of their own. Mazzini, perhaps, hardly realised this. Or rather, what he desired was hardly what we call democracy; for he defines democracy as "the progress of all through all, under the leadership of the best and wisest." And what he desired was, in truth, the common weal, was Public Virtue, and it was because the monarchies around him gave him no sufficing

image of her rule that he pictured her re-arisen in her ancient vesture and called by her Roman name.

(6) "No help in the deliverance of Italy is to be looked for from the Catholic Church." This principle also has been proved to be sound by the march of events. But it was opposed to some of the strongest currents of popular feeling in Italy, and to the aspirations of some of her noblest minds. The political programme of the "new Guelph movement" may seem to us plainly futile; its political leaders,—Gioberti or Rossi,—may be little to our taste. But behind them there was a force which was even tragic in its intensity,—the passionate reluctance of men who have entrusted their souls to a spiritual guide to admit to themselves that that guide betrays,—the determination at any cost to reconcile Catholicism with patriotism, the creed of the fathers with the duty of the sons.

The real knot of the situation was in the temporal power, which throughout this century, at least, has been a very millstone round the neck of the Papacy. The recent Popes, in fact, have been in a false position, in which their predecessors were seldom placed. In the days of the great Popes of the Middle Ages the temporal power was an almost nominal or at least a slightly-regarded thing. The policy of a Gregory or an Innocent was Catholic, not Italian. After the return of the Popes from Avignon the character of their aspirations changed: they sank into petty in-

triguing princes like the princes around them. The policy of an Alexander or a Leo was Italian, and not Catholic. But the time came when each of these terms might be interpreted in two ways. An Italian policy might mean a policy by which the Pope aimed first of all at preserving his position as an Italian prince, or a policy by which he placed himself at the head of the national aspirations of Italy. A Catholic policy might mean a policy by which he conciliated the despotic governments of Austria and Naples in return for material support, or a policy which kept him the spiritual leader of that great religious movement which is proceeding, quite independently of forms of civil government, in the old and the new world. Attachment to the temporal power has led the recent Popes in each case to choose the narrower alternative. How much the Catholic Church has lost through the endless series of compromises and concordats which the interests of the temporal power have necessitated, it is hard to say. In such traffic the rate of exchange rises all too rapidly against the vendor of impalpable wares. And now that the struggle is over and the temporal power gone, it is felt by the wisest Catholics themselves that a new independence is breathed into the Vatican counsels. If, then, it has been well for the Popes even to be forcibly deprived of the temporal power, what might they not have gained by its voluntary reform ;—nay, even by its dignified and timely surrender ! No party

in Italy deserves a deeper sympathy than the men, Catholics at once and patriots, who watched with powerless regret the loss of this unique opportunity. What chivalry in d'Azeglio, unable to the last to conceive of a severance between religion and honour! what pathos in Tosti, as he called to the marching patriots from the sanctuary of his Benedictine hill, "Sitting among the ruins of a day that is gone, I follow you with my love from far!"

This great problem of the relation of regenerate Italy to Catholicism was at once a personal and a public one to every Italian. Cavour and Mazzini solved it in their different ways. For his own part, Cavour especially retained a devoted priest to absolve his last hour, and made his way into heaven itself by a stroke of diplomacy. And his solution of the general question was of a similarly diplomatic kind. The Free Church in a Free State is a political and not a moral remedy for the deep division of the Italian people; it is all that statesmanship can offer, but it is no more than a *modus vivendi* between two halves of a nation.

To Mazzini, on the other hand, the spiritual unity of Italy seemed far more necessary, though far harder to achieve, than the political. He could more easily endure that Italian labour should enrich foreign rulers, than that in Italian hearts there should be any impulse of truth or virtue which did not unite in that full current of spiritual influence which it was Italy's

mission to pour upon the world. And yet how was this unity to be attained? A moral force can be absorbed or modified only by a stronger force of the same kind. And he who would offer to Catholics an ideal higher than the Catholic Church must needs resemble that Indian hermit of whom M. Renan tells us, who, expelled from the heaven of Indra, *created*, by the force of his meditation and the intensity of his merits, *another Indra and a new heaven*.

(7) And this brings us to the last article of Mazzini's programme: "Rome must give Europe a new religion—must a third time head and regenerate the world."

It is enough for the present to say that this has not been done.* When we discuss Mazzini's own springs of action we shall be better able to estimate the value and the future of his religious ideas. But in the world of public action these hopes have failed. And here, at last, we come upon a point which seems to justify the common view of Mazzini as a visionary and a Utopian.

In using these words, however, we must beware of confusion of thought. In dealing with men there are two distinct questions—How can we improve their condition now? and, How far may that condition be improved ultimately? If a man through holding enthusiastic views as to the future of the race mistakes or neglects the measures which they need now, it is just to censure him as a fanatic. But it is possible to

combine glowing hopes for the future with cautious sagacity in the present. The founders of the United States believed that their republic would be a moral pattern to mankind; but this did not prevent them from constructing a business country on business principles. Hardly Plato himself was in the world of theory more visionary than Bacon; and yet Bacon was the Apostle of Experiment, and in his conduct of the Court of Chancery was found to err even from excess of practicality. If we are to call men like Washington and Bacon Utopians the word has lost its sting.

And, like these men, Mazzini had two aspirations, the one practical and the other visionary. The first was the unity of Italy; the second the establishment therein of a religion and a republic. But the line which he took with reference to these two objects was essentially different. As to the first he accepted no compromise. He forgave no dereliction of this end, no halt on the road to its attainment. But his second object, though he held it the higher one, was never suffered to interfere with the first. Although nothing was done for Italy in the way that he would have chosen, there was nothing done for Italy that he did not support. For proof of this assertion there is no need to appeal to any controverted matter. His public manifestoes, which extend over his whole career and determined the action of his party, are evidence enough. This surely is all that we have a right to

demand of a reformer, that he shall set before him some actually attainable ideal, and secure it at whatever cost of self-suppression or compromise. If he does this, we need not blame him if he would have liked to do more. We need not blame him if in his desire for the happiness and virtue of others he refuses to be satisfied with the attainment of any given step upon an upward progress whose limit is unknown; if in reviewing his own work he will call nothing good which might have been better.

These, then, were the leading principles which Mazzini upheld through life by every line of thought, every form of action, which circumstances allowed. At first his influence was mainly through the press and correspondence. In literary and critical essays he gave to his views on life and duty a clear and dignified expression. By the association of "Young Italy" —so called from no fantastic preference for youth, but because hardly any grown men remained to Italy who still dared to hope—he spread these views through the length and breadth of the land. Another association, "Young Europe," brought the revolutionary element in other nations into sympathy with Italian freedom. And in a host of articles and pamphlets he afforded the impulse necessary to evoke the spark of patriotism in many a hesitating company of men, to "beat the twilight into flakes of fire."

It is of course impossible to define with exactness the amount of influence thus exerted; but it is notice-

able that we seldom find an Italian patriot ascribing his first ardour of public spirit to any other source; nor does any other source seem to have existed from which the rising people of Italy could draw their necessary and sustained inspiration. Giusti gave them trenchant satire. Guerrazzi gave them a mass of vigorous polemic. Gioberti offered such incitement to greatness as can be drawn from volumes of panegyric of a type which we are more accustomed to see addressed to the people of Paris. But Mazzini almost alone gave them what they needed most, a strain of manly virtue. "I love you too well," he wrote in the preface to his treatise on *The Duties of Man*, "either to flatter your passions or caress the golden dreams by which others seek to gain your favour. My voice may sound too harsh, and I may too severely insist on proclaiming the necessity of virtue and sacrifice, but I know, and you will soon know also, that the sole origin of every right is in a duty fulfilled."

The short treatise to which these words are prefixed should be read by those who have been accustomed to think of Mazzini as a violent revolutionary. Their first impression will probably be one of surprise at the subordination of political to religious dogma. The author has plainly more in common with Huss or Savonarola than with Robespierre or Mirabeau.

It will then be observed that, if we except his preference for a republic as the logical form of govern-

ment by the people, there is little in his opinions which would have disqualified him (for instance) from forming a member of an ordinary English liberal ministry. Even on questions of political economy—the great crux of the reformer—it may surprise us to find him both sound and inventive. Co-operation is his leading economical doctrine, and some of the practical measures by which he would encourage this are already at work in some towns of Italy, and are likely enough to spread farther. On one point alone economists will agree in pronouncing him mistaken ;—in his wish to raise the public revenue almost wholly by an income-tax. This is an extreme view, but it is still far enough from socialism or anarchy.

His literary work was much broken by the active business of insurrections. He took a personal part in all the movements which he originated, as well as in many which he disapproved as immature, but was unable to arrest.¹ He was remarkable for his cool courage in the presence of danger, and Colonel Medici has described his conduct as a private in the disastrous campaign of Garibaldi's Volunteers near Milan in 1848 in terms which recall the well-known story of the constancy of Socrates in the retreat from Potidæa. His skill as a tactician was thought highly of by his party. We know too little of the chances which were seized or missed to enable us to form an independent opinion, but it is plain that he applied to the art of

¹ See Joseph Mazzini, a Memoir, by E. A. V.

war the same humble and painstaking spirit which led him to shrink from no duty as paltry or uncongenial if it could serve Italy. We read his *Catechism of Guerilla Warfare*, and find the delicate student who began life with an Essay on a European Literature applying his mind to the right rules for lighting delusive camp fires and firing at the enemy's legs. And then in the intervals of these adventures we find the dangerous outlaw spending almost every evening for seven years (1841-48) in teaching a night-school of Italian organ-boys in his shabby lodgings in Hatton Garden.

Work such as this may seem a waste of time in a political leader. But the potency of Mazzini's sympathies was much increased by his coming thus to Italy as one that ministered — by his being, like Dominic, the *amoroso drudo* of a lofty and absorbing faith. And time was preparing for him a culminant opportunity when no fragment of knowledge, influence, reverence, which he had won, should be forgotten or in vain. The things which he had done in secret were to be proclaimed openly, and the banner of "God and the People" was to fly from the capitol of Rome.

II.

The first years of the pontificate of Pius IX. can be remembered with satisfaction by no party. Seldom has history shown a more curious complication of false posi-

tions and inextricable dilemmas. The main points of the situation are well known. The new Pope took from the first a lofty view of his spiritual prerogative, but began his reign without a definite temporal policy. He was kindly and simple-minded, but accessible to flattery and wanting in wisdom, and rather obstinate than strong. The liberal party took advantage of an amnesty which he issued on his accession—in itself a very ordinary act—to credit him with liberal tendencies, and to exalt him as the heaven-sent patron of Italian unity and freedom. He promised reforms, and was rewarded by calculated acclamations. There was something contemptible in this mode of cajoling a ruler, and there was something undignified in the way in which the flatteries were swallowed and the reforms postponed. The war of Piedmont with Austria in 1848 put an end to this child's play. At first, indeed, the demagogues pretended that the Pope had gone to war with Austria, and there was much debate as to whether he had or had not blessed the banners of the volunteers, and, if he had, whether his blessing would still be valid if they crossed the Po. But on April 29, 1848, the Pope published an allocution in which he definitely took the Austrian side. From that moment his popularity was gone. Alarmed at its loss he temporised again.

In the autumn of 1848 he placed Rossi at the head of affairs. Rossi tried to steer a middle course. The task was impossible; his own harshness and

pedantry embittered the enmities on both sides which his policy evoked, and he succeeded in uniting the contending factions only in the single object of assassinating himself. On November 15 he was stabbed at the door of the parliament. The cowardly Assembly held its session without alluding to the fact that the prime minister had been killed on the stairs. Both parties welcomed this crime. The liberal papers spoke of it without reprobation; the ultra-papal commandant of gendarmes refused to make any attempt to punish the assassins. The terrified Pope fled to Gaeta in disguise, and surrendered himself to the influence of Antonelli, who had pretended to join in the constitutional movement, but now showed his true colours, and kept his power till he died. It was now Antonelli's object that Rome should fall into anarchy. Commissioners were appointed to govern in the Pope's name, who refused to do anything except protest against the assumption of power by any one else. The deadlock was complete. Gradually a demand arose that Mazzini and Garibaldi should be sent for. Both accepted the call, Mazzini writing sternly of what had passed, and advising the convocation of a constituent assembly and the proclamation of a republic. This advice was followed, and on March 20, 1849, Mazzini and two Romans were chosen triumvirs.

In the deliberate absence of any ruler the Romans had no choice but to create a republic, but it was clear from the first that the fortunes of that republic were

almost desperate. Three of the four Catholic powers, Austria, Naples, and Spain, were certain to attack it. From two quarters only was help possible, from the rest of Italy or from France, the fourth Catholic power, but a power which was at that time republican also. As regarded help from the rest of Italy, the moment for seeking it had gone by. A year before Rome would have found all Italy, almost all Europe, in revolution, but now the flame was dying out. The defeat of Novara, on March 23, put an end to hope from Piedmont. An earnest attempt, made by Mazzini before his arrival in Rome, to secure co-operation from Tuscany failed, and the ill-conducted Tuscan constitutional movement expired with the return of the grandduke on April 13. Venice remained in arms; her heroic defence against Austria was adding the last glory to her famous name. But she could spare no help to Rome. From France Mazzini never hoped much, though neither he nor the French nation were prepared for what actually took place. France was undergoing a reaction from the exaggerated enthusiasms of 1848, in a dark hour of apathy and fears in which more than one sinister ambition was finding a congenial air.

M. Thiers¹ has related with cynical frankness the secret history of the despatch of the French expedition to Rome. Without his express authority we might have suspected, but should hardly have allowed ourselves to

¹ Conversations with Mr. Senior, *Fortnightly Review*, October 1877.

assert, that the expedition was from beginning to end a deliberate fraud upon both the French and Italian peoples; that almost every word uttered by the French ministers in the Assembly and the French general in Italy was a conscious falsehood; that, as M. Thiers says, "It was not for the sake of the Roman people, it was not for the sake of Catholicism, that we went to Rome, it was for the sake of France;" and for the sake of France in what way? In the first place to gain for the Prince-President the support of the clerical party, and in the second place to assert the influence of France in Italy in opposition to that of Austria, since, said M. Thiers, "rather than see the Austrian eagle on the flagstaff that rises above the Tiber, I would destroy a hundred constitutions and a hundred religions." This seems a needless energy of resolve, but M. Thiers tells us that we "can hardly conceive the interest which France takes in Rome," not only on vulgar grounds which all may share, as the centre of Catholicism, art, and history, but "as having long been the second city of the French Empire."

From any less exalted point of view it was certainly hard to find a reason why France should interfere in Rome in 1849. As a Catholic country she could not be expected to help the Roman republic against the Pope. Still less did it befit her, as a republic, to stifle a sister republic which had in many ways a stronger right to existence than herself. But although France was a republic, her ministers were not republicans;

they were paving the way, as fast as they dared, for an ultramontane empire; they were resolved to crush the Roman republic, and to help them to deceive the Assembly which they led they counted upon their countrymen's vanity, on their desire to pose as heroes on every stage which the world's history offers. M. Odilon Barrot rested his proposal for the despatch of troops to Italy on "the expediency of maintaining the French influence in Italy, and the wish to be instrumental in securing to the Roman people a good government, founded on liberal institutions." The Assembly consented, and a body of troops under General Oudinot was sent to Civita Vecchia. Before them went an aide-de-camp to announce "that the wish of the majority would be respected, and no form of government imposed which the Roman people had not chosen." Won by fair words, the municipality of Civita Vecchia allowed the French to land. The triumvirs remonstrated, but it was too late. They then sent to Oudinot a dignified protest, stating that this invasion was a violation of the law of nations, and declaring their intention to resist. Oudinot replied with a proclamation, written by M. Drouyn de Lhuys, which repeated that the French "had no wish to exercise an oppressive influence, or to impose a government contrary to the wish of the Romans." He then declared Civita Vecchia in a state of siege, disarmed the garrison, and forbade the municipality to meet. The prefect protested, and Oudinot put him in prison.

The French Assembly had authorised Oudinot to enter Rome "if he were likely to meet with no serious resistance, or were invited thither by the wish of the population." The triumvirs repeatedly told him that any attack on Rome would be strenuously resisted. He did, however, attack Rome on April 30, and was driven off by Garibaldi, leaving many wounded and prisoners. The wounded were carefully tended by a band of Roman ladies, who were afterwards described in the French Assembly as courtesans. The prisoners were released by the triumvirs, who refused to keep captive republicans who had been deluded into a fratricidal war. They thus expressed their belief in the brotherhood of all free men, just as Callicratidas, by releasing Greek prisoners, expressed his belief in the brotherhood of all Hellenes.

The news of this attack on Rome caused great discontent in France. M. Barrot disavowed Oudinot's action, but sent him reinforcements instead of recalling him. The general displeasure, however, compelled the ministers to send some man of high reputation as diplomatic agent, "to devote himself to negotiations and the relations to be established between the Roman authorities and the Roman people." M. de Lesseps, then one of the first of diplomatists, as he is now the first of engineers, was despatched with full powers. The masterly State-paper in which he afterwards defended his mission, supplemented as it is by the original documents, remains the unanswered history of these transactions.

Reaching Rome on May 10, M. de Lesseps found that the French position was an entirely false one, that the Romans were by no means in a state of anarchy, but resolute, united, and in no need of French arbitration. The most alarming element in the situation was the wounded vanity of the French officers, who wished to wipe out the memory of their defeat before Rome by a second assault upon that friendly city. While M. de Lesseps negotiated they prepared their attack. In spite of the armistice they threw a bridge of boats across the Tiber, and cut the communication between Rome and the sea; they seized the church of St. Paul-without-the-walls; they occupied Monte Mario—a most important position. There was a peculiar perfidy in this last act, since M. de Lesseps himself was deceived into informing the Roman government that this occupation was a mere “misunderstanding,” and intended to guard Rome against the advance of foreign foes. The triumvirs, justly impressed with M. de Lesseps’ honour, took pains to quiet the natural anger of the Roman people, who thus saw one point after another seized by the French troops. Meantime M. de Lesseps and the triumvirs concluded a convention as follows:—The Romans, welcoming the French as friends, allowed them to take up such positions outside Rome as health and the defence of the country required. This arrangement was in no case to be put an end to, except at a fortnight’s notice.

M. de Lesseps signed this convention, as he was

fully empowered to do. But General Oudinot refused to be bound by it. He went farther; he broke a promise of his own, given in writing to General Roselli, that he would defer the attack on Rome at any rate till June 4, and began the attack on June 2. Almost at the same moment—on May 29—M. de Lesseps was recalled. The fact was that on that very day the Constituent had given place to the Legislative Assembly, there was a shifting of power at Paris, and M. Barrot and those behind him could do as they pleased.

We may pause here to consider the internal condition of Rome. At the time when the Republic was proclaimed there was much to justify the contempt which was widely felt in Europe for the new government. The Romans seemed to be acting only because they could not help it; and the debates in the Assembly showed little except aimlessness and terror. Suddenly this temper changed. A mass of men in imminent danger may be sobered by it or maddened, according to the impulse given, and the Romans were like the crew of a sinking ship whose captain comes on deck and takes the command. A diplomatic despatch¹ has preserved for us an account of Mazzini's arrival in the Assembly, and the transformation of a scene of confused recrimination into a scene of enthusiasm and vigorous action. His influence on the troops was of the same kind. On his election as triumvir the officers of the National Guard told him that most of the guard

¹ Bianchi's *Diplomazia Europea*, vol. vi. p. 452.

would refuse to defend the city. "It seemed to me," he says, "that I understood the Roman people far better than they, and I therefore gave orders that all the battalions should defile in front of the Palace of the Assembly, that the question might be put to the troops. The universal shout of war that arose from the ranks drowned in an instant the timid doubts of the leaders."

It is, however, to Garibaldi that the credit of the heroic military defence of Rome must be mainly ascribed. We must look to the internal management of the city, its finances, order, religion, for definite traces of Mazzini's government. And here M. de Lesseps must first be heard. After speaking of a suspicion which he at first entertained that Mazzini was influenced against France by Protestant missionaries, he adds:—

"I have the less hesitation in making known the opinion which I then held of Mazzini, with whom I was in open conflict, inasmuch as throughout our subsequent negotiations I have nothing but praise for the loyalty and moderation of his character, which have won my entire esteem. Now that he has fallen from power, and is doubtless seeking a refuge in some foreign country, I owe an expression of homage to the nobility of his feelings, the sincerity of his convictions, his high capacity, his integrity, and his courage."

When the triumvirs assumed power the state of the public finances was such that their first act was to debate whether government could be carried on at all. Under the papal rule the treasury had been entrusted

to a dignified person who could not be called upon to show accounts, and was only removable by being made a cardinal. During the three perilous months of the triumvirate the finances were thoroughly put in order, and a large reserve of money collected, which was duly appropriated by the papal functionary on his return. The republican leaders left office poorer than when they accepted it. Mazzini, as triumvir, dined for two francs a day; Garibaldi, less provident than when, in 1860, after conquering a kingdom, he found that he had still nearly thirty pounds, left Rome in absolute penury. More surprising was the unwonted honesty of the lowest of the people. Some families whose houses were endangered by the French bombardment were quartered in the empty palaces of Roman nobles who had fled to Gaeta, leaving money and jewellery lying about their rooms. Not so much as a brooch was stolen. Crime, in fact, was for the time almost unknown. Some assassinations were committed at Ancona, which Mazzini instantly punished with terrible severity, threatening to send half the forces of the republic to Ancona if such crimes were repeated. If order, honesty, courage, are tests of civic life, it is not too much to say that Rome had never been so Roman since the Punic Wars. This spirit found a fit expression in Mazzini's State-papers, which show the characteristic Roman dignity, the absence of flattery or exaggeration, the stern assumption that the aim of every Roman is to live and die for Rome.

The accusations brought against Mazzini's government elude for the most part precise examination. To call him a communist, a bandit, a "modern Nero," was merely to use conventional language in describing a republican chief. There was more force in the complaints of some of his own party that by his Quixotic regard for the property and life of enemies, he threw away advantages which Rome could ill spare,—as when he exempted the rich men who had fled to Gaeta from taxation because they had not consented to be taxed,—or forbade Garibaldi to follow up the flying French army on April 30 because the Romans could not believe themselves to be at war with a friendly republic, except when they caught the French in the act of trying to enter Rome.

On a more serious matter Mazzini's government provoked fears in many quarters. It was suspected that he meant to disestablish Catholicism in favour of Protestantism, or of some other schismatic communion. It is worth while to consider what position he actually took up. He seems to have interfered with nothing which he did not think absolutely immoral, but rather to have laid stress on those acts of common worship or reverence which have the same force for all. Thus, on the one hand, he turned the Inquisition into a lodging-house for poor families, and protected monks and nuns who wished to re-enter the world. But when the people took some confessionals to strengthen barricades he ordered them to be instantly replaced, and

warned the Romans to shun even the appearance of an outrage against the religion of their fathers.

Easter, which fell in the time of the triumvirate, was celebrated with the accustomed solemnity. It is not the Pope whom Christians worship, and his absence need not stop a Christian feast. A priest blessed the people from the balcony of St. Peter's, and Mazzini, as representative of the republic, consented to stand there too,—a prophetic figure intercalated among so many pontiffs more strangely than Cromwell among the English kings.

Rome was defended long and bravely, but on June 30 the French were masters of the bastions and all the heights, and it was plain that the end was near. Mazzini then proposed a scheme which recalls "the oath of the Phocæans," and one of Horace's noblest odes. He proposed that the triumvirs, the Assembly, the army, and such of the people as chose, should leave Rome, and create in the Campagna a centre of desperate resistance to Austria and France. But the Assembly refused. "The singular calmness," adds Mazzini with some *naïveté*, "which they had shown until that moment had induced me to believe that they would have hailed the proposition with applause." This voluntary exile of the whole State—this carrying, as it were, into the desert of the fortune and the fame of Rome—would doubtless have created a profound impression throughout Italy and Europe. The men who made that expedition would probably all

have been killed—as almost all the men who did actually go out with Garibaldi were killed—but if they had maintained themselves even for a few months, it is still conceivable that Italy might have risen. The Assembly were not ready to do this; but what they did has won them the praise of heroism from judges less stern than the triumvir. Through all the perils of the siege they sat unmovedly—such of them as were not needed on the walls—perfecting the new constitution; and when the French were in the city, when once again—

“Galli per dumos aderant, arcemque tenebant,
Defensi tenebris et dono noctis opacae,”—

on that last morning the Assembly—destined, every man of them, to exile, imprisonment, or death—proclaimed upon the Capitol the Statutes of Republican Rome. Like the Roman who bought the field on which Hannibal was encamped, they testified to their belief that the enemies of the Eternal City should perish and that she should endure.

The French entered Rome. Garibaldi marched out with a handful of brave men, meaning to fight his way to Venice, which was still in arms. Mazzini remained in Rome to watch for any chance of renewing the struggle; but he knew in his heart that no such chance would come.

It is hard to lose the dream of a life; and when that dream has drawn all its lustre from virtue, when

joy has been conceived only in the loving service of the noblest being, the highest ideal we know, then if a man sees his ideal crushed before his eyes, and feels that honour itself has turned against him, and that because he has disdained base things he has lost all—then shall it be known whether his virtue is a derivative and conquerable thing, or has in it an inbred energy that is incapable of despair. If he can raise his head to fight anew, he will find all fighting easy now. The worst has come to the worst; henceforth can no man trouble him; he bears in his spirit the tidemark of its highest woe.

Through such an hour Mazzini passed, sitting among the ruins of his Rome. He waited for friends to rally round him, but none dared to rally—for foes to slay him, but no man dared to slay. At last he passed through the midst of them and went his way, and as for the last time he saw the sun set on Rome, he might surely have said with more truth than any Cato of tragedy,

“Son Roma i fidi miei, Roma son io.”

And here, if it were cast into a drama, the tale of Mazzini's life would close; for there are careers which culminate in defeat, as others in victory, and the labours of another score of years gave no second chance to face unshaken such a crash and ruin of a world. The year 1849, in spite of its crushing defeats, was in fact a turning-point in Italian fortunes.

Men had measured themselves with the enemy ; they had learnt to dare ; and the movement throughout Italy was never wholly checked again. In each onward step Mazzini aided. His words, his writings, gaining fresh authority as advancing years confirmed their wisdom in the past, were the fountain-head of that clear and continuous manifestation of the national will which impelled and enabled the Piedmontese government to take advantage of each opportunity that offered for the unification of Italy. Of the way in which this was done, however, he often disapproved. Nothing, for instance, could be more distasteful to him than the French alliance on which Piedmont depended in 1859. He foretold, and truly, that it would be bought at an extravagant price. And had it been granted without sinister end, he yet could not endure that Lombards or Venetians, the descendants of Livy and Dandolo, should owe their liberty to a foreign despot's grace, should accept from an unclean hand

“ A gift of that which is not to be given

By all the blended powers of earth and heaven.”

After the peace of Villafranca he used all his influence to induce the small States of Central Italy to annex themselves to the Piedmontese monarchy—unity, as ever, being his first aim. It was he again who prepared, and urged Garibaldi to undertake, the revolution in Sicily and Naples, promising that if it succeeded he would claim nothing of the glory, and that if it

failed it should be accounted a "Mazzinian dream." After Garibaldi's splendid success in Naples in 1860 Mazzini's eyes were turned to Venice and Rome. The liberation of Venice was marred by the same intervention which had marred the liberation of Lombardy. The deliverance of Rome was long, and, as Mazzini thought, needlessly delayed; and when it came in 1870 it came only to show him that the Rome of his aspiration, the religious republican Rome, which was a third time to head the world, was not to be built in a day.

He felt, too, a sorrow which came not from Italy alone—the sorrow of seeing the cause of liberty and progress in Europe defiled by anarchy and divorced from religion—tyranny and bigotry opposed not by free co-operation and deeper faith, but by communistic outrages and materialistic unbelief. And of all this his religious isolation weighed on him the most. "The religious question," he wrote in 1865, "pursues me like a remorse; it is the only one of any real importance." And although to the last, and through the long decay of a terrible disease, he continued his active work of all kinds, and died by inches in harness, toiling without haste or rest, yet his increasing preoccupation with religious ideas becomes plainly evident. This is accompanied by a melancholy wonder that others cannot see as he sees, by a painful yearning for the progress of kindred souls. Yet with this there is that serenity which often comes to those to whom youth has been a generous struggle, and manhood a

disciplining pain. There is a disengagement as of a spirit which has already borne all; and which, like one who awaits a solemn ceremony, is making ready for the Sacrament of Death.

And surely, when Mazzini's story shall have passed into Italian legend and song, men will say, in old Greek fashion, that it was "not without the will of heaven" that it was appointed to this man to die not in Genoa, turbulent nurse of heroes, where in dark days he had been born; not in Rome, where he had ruled in manhood, more royal than a king; but in that still city upon Arno's stream, to which, after all her tumults, it has been given to become the very sanctuary and image of peace,—

"To body forth the ghostliness of things
In silence visible and perpetual calm."

Even so, will their poets answer, Apollo sought the body of Sarpedon, "best-beloved of men," and carried him far from the battle, and washed him in Scamander's wave, and gave him to two mighty ministers to bear him home,—

*"Ὑπνῳ καὶ θανάτῳ διδυμάουσιν, οἳ ῥά μιν ᾧκα
κάτθεσαν ἐν Λυκίῃς ἐυρείῃς πίοισι δῆμῳ.*

III.

In discussing a public life we naturally consider it first as the public saw it—its struggles or weaknesses concealed beneath at any rate an external strength

and consistency. But when the character is so exceptional as Mazzini's, we desire also to know something of its springs of action, of the natural instincts which transformed themselves into so unusual a vigour of public virtue. And Mazzini has himself told the story of the chief inward crisis of his life, after the failure of his first insurrection and the death of many of his friends. A few quotations will indicate the sources alike of his weakness and of his strength :—

“ Were I to live for a century I could never forget the close of that year (1836), nor the moral tempest that passed over me, and amid the vortex of which my spirit was so nearly overwhelmed. I speak of it now with reluctance, and solely for the sake of those who may be doomed to suffer what I then suffered, and to whom the voice of a brother who has escaped from that tempest—storm-beaten and bleeding indeed, but with re-tempered soul—may, perhaps, indicate the path of salvation.

“ It was the tempest of doubt, which I believe all who devote their lives to a great enterprise, yet have not dried and withered up the soul, like Robespierre, beneath some barren intellectual formula, but have retained a loving heart, are doomed, once at least, to battle through. My heart was overflowing with and greedy of affection ; as fresh and eager to unfold to joy as in the days when sustained by my mother's smile ; as full of fervid hope, for others at least, if not for myself. But during those fatal months there darkened around me such a hurricane of sorrow, disillusion, and deception, as to bring before my eyes, in all its ghastly nakedness, a foreshadowing of the

old age of my soul, solitary, in a desert world, wherein no comfort in the struggle was vouchsafed to me.

“It was not only the overthrow, for an indefinite period, of every Italian hope; the dispersion of the best of our party; the series of persecutions which had undone the work we had done in Switzerland and driven us away from the spot nearest Italy; the exhaustion of our means, and the accumulation of almost insurmountable material obstacles between me and the task I had set myself to do;—it was the falling to pieces of that moral edifice of faith and love, from which alone I had derived strength for the combat; the scepticism I saw rising around me on every side; the failure of faith in those who had solemnly bound themselves with me to pursue unshaken the path we had known at the outset to be choked with sorrows; the distrust I detected in those most dear to me as to the motives and intentions which sustained and urged me onward in the evidently unequal struggle. Even at that time the adverse opinion of the majority was a matter of little moment to me; but to see myself suspected of ambition or any other than noble motives by the one or two beings upon whom I had concentrated my whole power of attachment, prostrated my spirit in deep despair. And these things were revealed to me at the very time when, assailed as I was on every side, I felt most intensely the need of comforting and re-tempering my spirit in communion with the fraternal souls I had deemed capable of comprehending even my silence, of divining all that I suffered in deliberately renouncing every earthly joy, and of smiling in suffering with me. It was precisely in this hour of need that these fraternal souls withdrew from me.

“When I felt that I was indeed alone in the world—alone, but for my poor mother, far away and unhappy also for my

sake—I drew back in terror at the void before me. Then, in that moral desert, doubt came upon me. Perhaps I was wrong and the world right? Perhaps my idea was indeed a dream? Perhaps I had been led on not by an idea but by *my* idea; by the pride of my own conception, an intellectual egotism withering the spontaneous impulses of my heart, which would have led me to the modest virtues of a limited sphere, and to duties near at hand and easy of fulfilment.

“I will not dwell upon the effect of these doubts on my spirit. I will simply say that I suffered so much as to be driven to the confines of madness. At times I started from my sleep at night and ran to the window, in delirium, believing that I heard the voice of Jacopo Ruffini calling to me. The slightest incident, a word, a tone, moved me to tears. Whilst I was struggling and sinking beneath my cross I heard a friend, whose room was a few doors distant from mine, answer a young girl—who, having some suspicion of my unhappy condition was urging him to break in upon my solitude—by saying, ‘Leave him alone; he is in his element—conspiring and happy.’”

He goes on to narrate how the conviction came to him that his sufferings were the temptations of egotism, and arose from a misconception of life, from some remaining influence exercised on him by the theory which proposes to each man the *search after happiness* as the aim of his existence here.

“I had combated the evil in others, but not sufficiently in myself. In my own case, and as if the better to seduce me, that false definition of life had thrown off every baser stamp of material desires, and had centred itself in the

affections, as in an inviolable sanctuary. I ought to have regarded them as a blessing of God, to be accepted with gratitude whenever it descended to irradiate or cheer my existence, not demanded them either as a right or as a reward. I had unconsciously made of them the condition of the fulfilment of my duties. I had been unable to realise the true ideal of love—love without earthly hope—and had unknowingly worshipped, not love itself, but the joys of love. When these vanished I had despaired of all things; as if the joys or sorrows I encountered on the path of life could alter the aim I had aspired to reach; as if the darkness or serenity of heaven could change the purpose or necessity of the journey. . . .

“I came to my better self alone; without aid from others, through the help of a religious conception, which I verified by history. From the idea of God I descended to the conception of progress; from the conception of progress, to a true conception of life; to faith in a mission and its logical consequence—duty, the supreme rule of life; and having reached that faith I swore to myself that nothing in this world should again make me doubt or forsake it. . . . I dug with my own hands the grave, not of my affections—God is my witness that now, grayheaded, I feel them yet as in the days of my earliest youth—but of all the desires, exigencies, and ineffable comforts of affection; and I covered the earth over that grave, so that none might ever know the *Ego* buried beneath. From reasons—some of them apparent, some of them unknown—my life was, is, and were it not near the end, would remain unhappy; but never since that time have I for an instant allowed myself to think that my own unhappiness could in any way influence my actions. Whether the sun shine with the serene splendour of an Italian morn, or the leaden corpse-

like hue of the northern mist be above us, I cannot see that it changes our duty. God dwells above the earthly heaven, and the holy stars of faith and the future still shine within our own souls, even though their light consume itself unreflected as the sepulchral lamp."

Is not this what the poet means when he speaks of *Virtue like a household god promising empire*?—this return upon itself of the resolute spirit, beginning, as it were, an inward epoch with a Hegira from all earthly joy, and proclaiming an unknown triumph in the very extremity of disaster and defeat? I have quoted this passage because of all his writings it best explains the man; because it shows that the passion of love in its loftiest meaning was the guiding energy of his whole career, so that if Garibaldi is "one of Plutarch's men," Mazzini is one of Plato's; he is the *ἐρωτικὸς μετὰ φιλοσοφίας*, the man who has carried down with him the instincts of love and of philosophy from the heaven where he has looked on truth; he mounts from step to step that chain of high affections along which Plato teaches that a soul can rise from the love of its human counterpart to the love of God. The intermediate passion between these two is the love of country—the love, as Plato has it, of institutions and of laws—the devotion to great ideas which widely influence the welfare of mankind. For the patriot too is enamoured; he is enamoured of his conception of a great multitude of kindred souls, leading the life which he deems noblest after the

fashion which he can picture best, happy amid the scenes inwoven with his earliest and his inmost joy.

This parallel between the lover, the patriot, the saint, might be carried far. It will be enough here to notice some analogies between Mazzini's love for Italy and that love which the world has agreed to take as the loftiest type of individual passion, the love of Dante for Beatrice. Both loves were wholly free from self-assertion and jealousy, both were intensified and exalted by sorrow.

Mazzini's whole public career was a series of self-abnegations. He sowed the harvest which another statesman reaped; the people for whom he had toiled the first and the hardest made its idol of another hero. But for this there is not in his most intimate correspondence the shadow of a regret. The only solicitude which he shows is for the memory of some of his earliest friends—the Ruffini, the Bandiera—whom he thinks in danger of missing the reverence which is their due. To his own acts he rarely alludes; and but for the pressure which induced him to write some autobiographical notes towards the close of his life, there would already be great difficulty in retracing his career. It is owing to the care of others that his writings have not been dispersed and lost. What need was there for him to put on record his love for Italy? What could other men's knowledge or ignorance of it add to it or take away? That Italy, as he conceived her, should exist, would have been enough for him.

Another form of jealousy leads the lover to disparage all loves except his own, from his uneasy fear lest she may not in truth be so unique as he wishes to believe her. From this also the truest lovers, the truest patriots, are free. Like Dante, they desire that Monna Vanna should walk with Monna Bice on the flowery way, that Lucia should stand beside Beatrice in the height of heaven, that all fair women should grow to their best and fairest, and keep thereby the sweeter company with her whom they never can excel ; or their patriotism is like Mazzini's, who desired that all other nations also should be free and grow, that each should express to the full the divine idea which is the centre of her strength, being assured that the place of Italy could none other take, nor city in either hemisphere diminish the name of Rome.

Consider again the influence, on lover or patriot, of exile, severance, sorrow. There are some, indeed, who have called human love an importunate and perishable thing, which must be fed with such food as earth can give it, lest it pine and die ; but a love like Dante's is not so, but grows more pervading through self-control, and more passionate through the austerity of honour, and only draws a stronger aliment from separation, anguish, and death. And similarly the intensification of Mazzini's love for Italy, through her sorrows and his own, is manifest in all his works. Loving Italy in every phase of her existence, he "less loves her crowned than chained ;" his passion is the passion of

a chivalry which at once compassionates and adores. And we see it strengthen in his own yearning solitude; we feel it in many a mournful sentence, whose immediate impulse we can now no more retrace than the anatomist can retrace the pang which has given birth to a tear.

Few natures could have derived more suffering than Mazzini's from a life of conspiracy and exile. Compare him, for instance, with his fellow-townsmen Bixio, the true type of the Genoese revolutionary. Bixio needed for his happiness nothing but adventure and storm. When the last despot in Italy was overthrown, "the second of the thousand" of Garibaldi's heroes could find no peace till he went out to struggle with the elements and an unsailed sea. Men like Bixio, like Garibaldi, are at ease in revolutions. Mazzini was differently wrought. The beautiful melancholy countenance, the delicate frame, the candid and yearning heart,—all these indicated a nature born for thought and affection, not meant for suspicions and controversies and the bitterness of a life-long war. Courage, indeed, was easy, conspiracy was endurable, but exile broke his heart. Dante was exiled, but Dante could still look on Italian faces and hear Italian speech, and know that the city of his love and hatred lay beneath the same arch of heaven. With this other exile it was not so. It was in London—the visible type of a universe hastening confusedly to unknown ends and careless of individual pain—that Mazzini

must regret that land whose name, even to men born far off, seems to make a part of all soft desire,—the land whose very air and memory invite to unworldly emotion and to passionate repose.

And in that inward exile of the heart it was easy in comparison for Dante to sustain long life upon the brief possession of what no soul can forget. Mazzini's was a harder lot. No eyes were to promise him his peace,—*noi darem pace a voi diletto*; he must imagine for himself the unknown delight; he must recognise, as he said, those for whom he cared most deeply rather by the pain they could give him than the joy. Even as for the sake of Italy he must endure to be exiled from Italy, so for love's sake he must renounce love; his affections must be the more ardent because impersonal; he must foster them only to forego.

It does not seem, however, that Mazzini considered himself as entitled to any special pity. Had he chosen his own lot on earth it is likely that he would have desired that some great cause should absorb his energies and teach him to make life one effort of virtue, and to adventure his all unreservedly upon the instinct of duty which he carried in his heart. It is likely that he would have purchased this temper at the cost of life-long pain, if he could make of unselfish sorrow his initiation into the mystery of human fellowship, his needed impulse to an impersonal hope. For indeed tenderness is as necessary as courage if a life of sorrow is to be made wholly heroic. The very unselfish-

ness of such a man's work for others is in danger of bringing with it something of isolation as well as of sympathy. Against his will a certain sternness and aridity will infuse itself into his manner and his style; by silence rather than by speech his self-suppression will be too plainly seen.

It is against such an impression of Mazzini as this that his friends are at most pains to guard. They wish us to imagine him as a man kept in deep peace by aspiration only, and by such simple pleasures as are inseparable from the child-like heart. They tell us of his playful humour, of the mild brightness of his friendly eyes, of his delight in birds, in flowers, in children—of moments when the yearning exile was overheard singing softly to himself at dead of night, while his guitar “spake low to him of sweet companionships.” They would have us believe that “there is nothing which a spirit of such magnitude cannot overcome or undergo”—that the storms which beat on such a head can only give a new depth to tenderness, a new dignity to the appealing look, *che par sorriso ed è dolore*.

And what then, we may ask, were the beliefs from which this constancy was born? On what conception of the universe did he sustain this impregnable calm?

The answer to this question, which has already been given in effect in Mazzini's own words, is somewhat singular. Without appeal to revelation, with only the afterthought of an appeal to history, he as it were discovered and lived by a theology of his own.

He became the apostle and martyr of a view of the sum of things which simply occurred to him, of dogmas which no one taught him, and which, though he constantly preached them, he scarcely attempted to prove. Before we consider the dogmas themselves, we may pause to inquire whether there can be any justification for this prophetic attitude in an age which may be supposed to have learnt to attain truth by organised methods, and independently of individual enthusiasms.

In this age of profound modification of received beliefs it would seem that a man's duty with regard to religion may be of three kinds. There are some who, though almost hopeless of arriving at any convictions as to an unseen world, seem strong enough to dispense with hope; who can labour for their own progress, though they believe it ended in the tomb,—for the progress of the race, though they doubt whether man will ever raise into any greatness or worthiness his “transitory and perilous” being. The duty of these is clear. They are the champions of a forlorn adventure; their mission is to show by their lives that Virtue can never be a paradox; that she can approve herself by the mere fact of her existence even in a world where the truth is bad. But these, above all men, must be strong. Cato and Brutus were men of iron; but these men must be made of sterner stuff than Brutus or Cato. They must be able to meet unflinchingly the most iniquitous ruin, the last defeat; and not despair, like Cato, of the Republic; nor fall, like Brutus, exclaiming

in death's disillusionment, "Ah, wretched Virtue! thou wert then nothing but a name."

There are others, again, who, while they do not assert that religious tradition suffices to meet the wider view and keener scrutiny of the advancing time, consider, nevertheless, that there is something premature, something almost impatient, in already abandoning, as insoluble, problems of such import to mankind. So variously may history be read that, while to some minds we may seem the empty-handed heirs of all the ages, who have asked every question and found every answer vain, to others it appears that those ages have been but the infancy of man; that he has hardly as yet formulated the question which he would ask of the Unseen; that as yet he can neither estimate the value of such answers as have been given nor anticipate those which are to come. For Socrates, too, prided himself on having brought philosophy down from heaven to earth, from unprovable speculations about the firmament to debates upon the nature of man, while in reality the speculations of Thales and Anaxagoras, though premature, were not useless; and meantime Euclid was writing, as it were, upon the dust the first letters of that learning which should weigh and analyse the very stars of heaven. Men who take this view, also, have their duty clear. If they surmise that it may not be impossible to know something of the destinies of man, they must pursue that search, though it be by means which bear as humble a relation to the

moral universe as the diagrams of Euclid bore to the sidereal heaven.

There are others, again, to whom a certain view of the universe appears axiomatic; who seem to themselves to be speaking that which they do know, testifying that which they have seen, when they describe the character and counsels of the Eternal. Such men the world tests by a rough standard of its own; if it holds them for prophets it suffers itself to be swayed by them, even if they produce no evidence of what they affirm.

Such was Mazzini's case. He appealed, indeed, to history; but who has not appealed to that echo of our own voices from the past? In reality he rested his doctrine upon the convictions of his own heart. Nor need this defect of evidence make us refuse to consider his creed. For we know that even in ages when proof was very readily admitted, religious feeling rested far less upon proof than upon intuition. Some religions scarcely appeal to proof at all; in almost all religions the religious instinct is presupposed and the alleged proofs do but direct its manifestation. And as the world advances, this subjectivity of religion becomes increasingly apparent. For the mass of religious feeling increases while at the same time alleged proofs are more vigorously tested and more freely overthrown. The result is that the old revelations, while they remain sacred, tend gradually to affect mankind in a new way—less as an external evidence of an unseen world

than as a venerable confirmation of what is felt within. It may, indeed, be urged that if in an exact age we are to attain to any conclusive knowledge of an unseen world we must attain it by an increased power of accurately apprehending unseen forces—by experiment rather than by tradition, by scientific rather than historical inquiry. This is not the prophet's business; and he may fairly assume that in the meantime religious conviction must be held instinctively if it is to be held at all, and that nothing would be gained by invoking defective evidence to supplement imperfect intuition.

This absolute and prophetic tone, commending itself irresistibly to many minds as the vehicle of lofty truth, was the source of much of Mazzini's influence in the political as well as in the religious sphere. And hence the effect which he produced was within its own limits more intense and pervading than the effect—powerful though this was—produced by Garibaldi or Cavour. A physical analogy will serve to illustrate my meaning.

We are apt to pass through somewhat similar stages in our contemplation of Nature and of Man. The child or savage takes the common course of things for granted, and is impressed only by the abnormal and prodigious; he reverences the tempests and not the tides, the thunderbolt rather than the dew. With the birth of Science our view changes. We learn to see in Order the highest Force, to recog-

nise the highest Will in adherence to unchanging Law. The sense of power which this conception gives is such that the mind seems capable of coping with the sum of things; we are tempted to believe that there is no room in the universe for phenomena that transcend our analysis.

But in the face of certain problems the inquirer is forced to change his tone once more. For he finds that the laws and operations which can be known have no finality; that they afford him a subtle, almost a visionary, perception of operations beyond his ken, of laws of which our highest generalisations may be but the specialised case or the incidental aspect. Standing on the shore of the sea of truth, he divines a universe alive and restless as the sea—the storm of inconceivable energies, and the stress of an unknown control.

And thus it is with our judgment of the lives of men. Our first admiration is for heroic impulse: great cities surge around the progress of a deliverer, whose deeds have overpassed the common measure of humanity, and confronted him with death and fame. Later comes our reverence for statesmanship and wisdom—the reign of Law without, the reign of Reason within; it seems clear that all other ideals can be but distortions or mutilations of this. Nor does the great statesman ignore the faiths and impulses which most men dimly feel: he accepts their validity up to a certain point, and the fact that he

goes no farther seems to prove that there is no farther to go. In our sense that such a man is a microcosm, we half forget that even our cosmos is an island in an infinite sea.

It may well be that nothing leads us to change our ideal again. Men have few aims which cannot be compassed by a Garibaldi or a Cavour.

But a sterner stress may come. For ourselves, or for a whole people, we may need a courage which no chivalrous eagerness can sustain, nor wisdom of this world justify, which shall be at once persistent as deliberate habit, and unhesitating as the impulse of one crowning day. Then we learn that the lever which moves the earth has its fulcrum in the unseen, that the maximum of human energy can only be evoked by one whom we may call as we please enthusiast or prophet.

The indications of a Higher Law to which a preacher like Mazzini appeals may always seem to us inconclusive, may sometimes seem illusory: but whether the cause of his faith and hope be real or unreal there is reality in their effects; the very aspect and rumour of lofty conviction carries a sovereignty among men, and to those who have had close cognisance of such a soul it will seem to have been raised up like a god's statue facing eastward in the market-place, *ut claros spectaret in ortus*—to look towards the dawn of day—to make “a precursory entrance into the most holy place, by a divine transportation.”

Such, at least, was the impression which Mazzini produced upon minds attuned to his message—upon men who died, like Quadrio, affirming their belief in “God, Mazzini, and Duty.” And what Mazzini preached was God and Duty — God, indwelling, just, and good ; Duty that prompts to endless effort, rewarded by endless progress, while the soul mounts through ascending existences to an inconceivable oneness with the Divine. There is nothing new in such a conception of man’s destinies as this. It descended in a mystery from the East, and before it was preached by Plato and Virgil, the prophets of the Greek and Roman world, it had been through infinite sorrows the consolation of unnumbered men. Nay, more—Mazzini believed that Christ Himself, looking with an unique foreknowledge beyond the horizon of His earthly age, had foretold the progressive revelation of a faith whose teaching should embrace His own ; He had said that it was expedient that He should depart from us that the Paraclete might come ; He had promised us the Spirit of Truth, who should guide us into all truth, who should show us the things to come, who should abide with us for ever. And Mazzini — continuing that controversy between prophet and priest which is as old as the Jewish Theocracy—believed that religion is not a tradition maintained by rites, but an inspiration renewed by the Spirit ; and that the Holy Ghost is with us now ; and that chosen souls express the message, as the whole world works out the thoughts of

God. Each quickening of the higher life, each pure strain of reverence for God, for Nature, for Humanity, which science or art, or solitary musing, or the collective action of nations could teach, he held as a gift from the same hand which had already given our all. And it was his passionate impulse to "incarnate in humanity," as he said, "that portion of eternal truth which it is granted to us to perceive—to convert into an earthly reality so much of the kingdom of heaven, the Divine conception permeating life, as it is given us to comprehend," which "haunted him like a remorse," which controlled him as a mission, which bade him speak as one having authority, and confront the Ecumenical Council with a theology more august than their own.

"The arch of the Christian heaven," he said to them,¹ "is too narrow to embrace the earth. Beyond that heaven, across the fields of the infinite, we discern a vaster sky, illumined by the dawn of a new dogma; and on the rising of its sun your own heaven will disappear. We are but the precursors of that dogma—few as yet, but earnestly believing; fortified by the collective instincts of the peoples, and sufficiently numerous to convince you—had you sense to comprehend it—that when the tide of materialism shall recede, you will find yourselves confronted by a far other foe. God, the Father and Educator—the law prefixed by Him to life—the capacity, inborn in all men, to fulfil it—free-will, the condition of merit—progress upon the ascent

¹ Letter to the Ecumenical Council. *Fortnightly Review*, June 1, 1871.

leading to God, the result of right choice—these are the cardinal points of our faith.

“You believe—thus depriving yourselves of every basis of intellectual certainty and criterion of truth—in *miracles*; in the supernatural; in the possible violation of the laws regulating the universe.

“We believe in the Unknown, in the Mysterious—to be one day solved—which now encompasses us on every side; in the secrets of an *intuition* inaccessible to analysis; in the truth of our strange presentiment of an Ideal, which is the primitive fatherland of the soul; in an unforeseen power of action granted to man in certain rare moments of faith, love, and supreme concentration of all the faculties towards a determinate and virtuous aim; but we believe all these things the preordained consequence of laws hitherto withheld from our knowledge.

“You believe in a heaven extrinsic to the universe; in a determinate portion of creation, on ascending to which we shall forget the past, forget the ideas and affections which caused our hearts to beat on earth.

“We believe in *One Heaven* in which we live, and move, and love; which embraces—as an ocean embraces the islands that stud its surface—the whole indefinite series of existences through which we pass. We believe in the *continuity* of life; in a connecting link uniting all the various periods through which it is transformed and developed; in the eternity of all noble affections; in the progressive sanctification of every germ of good gathered by the pilgrim soul in its journey upon earth and elsewhere.

“We reject the possibility of irrevocable perdition as a blasphemy against God, who cannot commit self-destruction in the person of the creature issued from himself—as a negation of the law prefixed to life, and as a violation of

the idea of love which is identical with God. We believe that God called us, by creating us; and the call of God can neither be impotent nor false. *Grace*, as we understand it, is the tendency or faculty given to us all gradually to incarnate the Ideal; it is the law of progress which is His ineffaceable baptism upon our souls."

It is plain that he who believes these things has nothing left to desire. What can we ask of the sum of things but an eternity of love, an eternity of virtue, —to mount upwards to the utmost limits of the conceivable, and still be at the beginning of our hope? And yet we need not wonder that Mazzini was mournful. High thoughts bring a deep serenity; but while his brother men were so suffering and so imperfect the yearning for their progress was to him an ever-present pain. His mind had taken so strong a bent that he conceived the future always for himself as duty, and only for others as joy. Such an one must "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" it must be enough for him—

"That to him too the high fates gave
Grace to be sacrificed and save."

And is there any life which on reflection seems to us more desirable than this? Is there not something within us which even exults at the thought that Mazzini's years were passed in imprisonment and exile, in solitude and disappointment, in poverty and pain? Are we not tempted to feel a proud triumph in the contrast between such a man's outer and his inward

fortunes, in the obloquy or indifference which surrounded so high a soul? And this feeling, though exaggerated, has in it a germ of truth. For we may rejoice for any one that for him life has been stripped of its tinsel, that things have been shown him as they are, that there has been nothing to disguise or darken the chief concerns of man. And as in the case of some private heroism, dear to our hearts, we may be well content that it has run its fair course unnoted, and in silence passed away, so we may be glad, even for a public and national hero, that he has missed the applause of the unworthy and all that is vulgarising in a wide renown. Yet all are bound, so far as they may, to use the memory of a good man's life as he used the life itself, as an example to whom it may concern; and for this reason, perhaps, those who can speak of Mazzini with better right than I, may pardon this imperfect picture of one whom we would not willingly that base men should so much as praise :

ἐνδρὸς, ὃν οὐδ' αἰνεῖν τοῖσι κακοῖσι θέμις.

GEORGE SAND.

ὦδε γὰρ κρατεῖ
γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ.

A GREAT spirit has passed from among us ; and many, no doubt, have of late been endeavouring to realise distinctly what kind of pleasure they have drawn, what lessons they have learnt, from the multitudinous writings of the most noteworthy woman, with perhaps one exception, who has appeared in literature since Sappho.

To estimate the general result and outcome of a series of romances like George Sand's is no easy task. For while on the one hand they contain implicitly what amounts to a kind of system of philosophy and theology, yet on the other hand the exposition of this system is so fluctuating and fitful, so modified by the dramatic necessities of varied plots, that it is hard to disentangle the operative and permanent from the inert and accidental matter.

Yet it is distinctly as a force, an influence, a promulgation of real or supposed truths, rather than as a repertory of graceful amusement, that these books claim consideration. We know that the moral leadership of

the mass of the reading world has passed to a great extent into the hands of romance-writers. Voltaire, Rousseau, Bernardin de St. Pierre, Chateaubriand, are some of the names which at once occur of Frenchmen who have found in prose fiction a powerful means of influencing the ideals and the conduct of their contemporaries. George Sand and Victor Hugo have succeeded to this power, and these two have, for nearly two generations, been the most popular authors in France. Long ago Sainte-Beuve placed George Sand and Lamennais at the head of living French writers; but the fame of Hugo has waxed; the fame of Lamennais has waned; George Sand's continues to shine with a steady lustre.

Inferior, perhaps, to Balzac in the power of accurately reproducing the society around her, George Sand chooses by preference subjects which she can approach, not so much from without as from within; her works are the outcome of a meditative nature which lives in imagination through many lives, and applies to all the same guiding conceptions of man's duty and his fate.

It is somewhat strange, therefore, though the anomaly might be paralleled in the case of some more formal teachers,—that while every one agrees that George Sand's stories are pre-eminently novels with a purpose—"Tendenz-Novellen"—yet there is by no means the same concurrence as to what that purpose is, down what stream of tendency they do actually flow.

Her name was for many years "a word of fear" in

British households, where she was known chiefly from secondhand accounts of *Indiana*, and was pictured as the semi-masculine assailant of marriage and Christianity. Some German critics, on the other hand, less keenly interested in the maintenance of propriety all over the world, have preferred to view in her "the exponent of the ideas of 1830," the representative of that shadowy alliance between aristocracy, intellect, and the working man, as opposed to the *bourgeoisie* and the *juste milieu*, which ended in 1848-51 with the temporary triumph of the working man and the ultimate downfall of everybody. And there is some truth in both of these views. From *Indiana* (1831) till *Mauprat* (1836), in what may be called the Romances of Search, there is a tone of indignant protest against the structure of French society which amounts at times to revolt and bitterness. And from *Simon* (1836) till *Le Péché de M. Antoine* (1845), there are frequent traces of the political influence exercised over her by Michel de Bourges, Barbès, Louis Blanc, and Pierre Leroux. These strains of feeling correspond to well-marked but passing epochs of her life—the first to her married wretchedness, the second to her absorption, under Michel's ascendancy, in the constitutional struggles of a few hopeful but troubled years. But an attentive study of her works, or of her autobiography, reveals a life-long preoccupation of a very different kind. "*Elle a toujours été tourmentée des choses divines.*" Such are the words in which she sums up the true, the

inner history of her life — words well expressing the unrest of a ceaseless search, and the pain of a never-satisfied desire. “*Ceci est l'histoire de ma vie,*” she says; “*ma véritable histoire.*”

The passages in her books which indicate this perpetual preoccupation are in a certain sense so obvious as to escape notice. That is to say, they are so numerous and so long that the general reader has for the most part acquired the habit of skipping them. He shares the feelings of the able editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*: “Pour Dieu, m'écrivait souvent Buloz, pas tant de mysticisme!” It is George Sand's gravest artistic fault that she overloads her stories with such a mass of religious reverie. “C'est bien possible,” she replies, “mais je ne vois pas trop comment j'eusse pu faire pour ne pas écrire avec le propre sang de mon cœur et la propre flamme de ma pensée.”

The defect in art is obvious: it goes so far as to make some of her books almost unreadable, except to religious inquirers (e.g. *Spiridion*, *Mlle. la Quintinie*); but, on the other hand, the heartfelt sincerity of her sermons is equally undeniable.

In the earlier romances, the Romances of Search, we hear her appealing with passionate earnestness for light and revelation to an irresponsible heaven. And in the Romances of Exposition, which constitute the great bulk of her works, we have the scheme of the universe, at which she ultimately arrived, enforced upon us in a hundred different ways. This scheme is

nothing new ; it has even come by this time to possess a kind of orthodoxy of its own ; but forty years ago it was less widely held, and its adoption by one who had passed through the extreme phase of Catholicism indicated, in the then state of religious parties, no little breadth and moderation of mind. Briefly stated, it is much as follows :—There is a God, inconceivable and unknown, but approachable by prayer under the aspect of a Father in Heaven ; there is a Holy Spirit, or ceaseless influx of grace and light, receivable by sincere and ardent souls : and among the beings who have been filled fullest with this divine inspiration the first place belongs to Jesus Christ, whose life is the highest model which humanity has known. Progress is the law of the universe ; the soul's progress, begun on earth, is continued through an infinite series of existences ; nor is there any soul which may not ultimately rise to purity and happiness. Unselfish love is the best and most lasting of earthly experiences, for a love begun on earth may endure for ever. Marriage affords the best and the normal setting for such love ; but under exceptional circumstances it may exist outside the married state. Religious aspiration and unselfish love should form, as it were, the spirit of life ; its substance is best filled out by practical devotion to some impersonal ideal, — the scientific or meditative observation of Nature, the improvement of the condition of the people, or the realisation of our visionary conceptions in a sincere and noble art.

There is nothing original in this: "Ce que je suis," says George Sand, "tout le monde peut l'être: ce que je vois, tout le monde peut le voir: ce que j'espère, tout le monde peut y arriver. Il ne s'agit que d'aimer la vérité, et je crois que tout le monde sent le besoin de la trouver."

Perhaps the reader will best be able to test the accuracy of this synopsis of George Sand's teaching if we consider in detail, and with as many extracts as space will allow, her relation to each of these fundamental topics, the People, the Sexes, Art, Nature, Religion.

This mode of dividing a complex subject will admit of the introduction of a few reflections upon the events of Mme. Dudevant's life, considered as originating or modifying her opinions; and in the course of our analysis we shall perhaps arrive almost insensibly at some more general estimate of her magnitude as an author.

I. To begin, then, with her relation to "the people," under which vague word we mean to include the whole mass of social and political phenomena which have in her time overloaded the French calendar with so many mysterious allusions: the Hundred Days, the revolution of February, the state trials of April, the days of June, the revolution of July, the events of December—landmarks emerging, as it were, from the mingled and turbid under-current of Legitimism, Orleanism, Bonapartism, Saint-Simonism, and the terrible "doctrine of Babeuf."

It has often been remarked that her strangely-mixed ancestry seems to have fitted her in an especial manner for comprehending the most widely-separated classes of society. On one side she was descended from Augustus the Strong, King of Poland, whose gigantic and almost mythical figure towers above a weltering chaos of lust and war; and the blood of the great Maurice de Saxe ran with indelible nobility through the veins of her father, a gallant officer in Napoleon's army. Her mother was the daughter of a bird-catcher, and a true specimen of the grisette of Paris in all her ignorance, her excitability, her frailty, and her charm. Her father died early, and the care of her childhood was divided between her father's mother, a refined and stately lady of the old *régime*, and her own mother, who could not live away from the bustle of the Boulevards and the petty quarrels and trifling pleasures of a woman of the people. The mutual antagonism between these two guardians taught the girl many a lesson on the relation of class to class; and the affection which she felt for both combatants helped to give to the works of her later life that catholicity of view which enabled her to enter with equal ease into the essential feelings of every rank of life, to compose both *Le Marquis de Villemer* and *François le Champi*.

And it is a noteworthy result of this origin and this education that although George Sand is sometimes coarse and often fantastic in her descriptions of what is called "high life," she is never vulgar in the way in

which so many French authors, since the First Empire, have been vulgar,—with the vulgarity of a literary class revelling in the luxury and fashion into which intellectual power has raised them. Théophile Gautier, for instance, with all his wealth of imagination and grace of style, obviously does not possess what we in England call “the instincts of a gentleman.” Now George Sand always has “the instincts of a gentleman,” though she may not always have those very different instincts which we call “the instincts of a lady.”

Through all her dealings with the ordinary literary and political world around her, this difference between her and them is discernible. She is free from their effusive self-assertion, their uneasy vanity; she is indifferent to luxury and to fame; there is about her a tranquillity like that of the Sphinx, to which her baffled admirers so often compared her—something steadfast, disdainful, and serene. The very length and vigour of her life seemed to attest the potency of her race. She had, as it were, the power of living down everybody and everything—enemies, partisanship, scandals, loves—whole schools of thought and whole generations of men. These pass away and leave her in great old age sitting beneath the roof that sheltered her earliest years, and writing for her grandchildren stories in which her own childhood lives anew.

Let us consider, then, in what way this largeness and serenity of view which we claim for George

Sand's mature works manifests itself in her dealings with public questions. It will be found, we think, that while inspired by a strong and steady love of liberty and progress, she was free from the obvious faults of ordinary French reformers: their violent party spirit, their extravagant doctrines, and their tendency to expect the salvation of society from without rather than from within; to imagine that a rearrangement of institutions can actually *raise* a man, whereas it can do no more than give him a better chance of raising himself. Now George Sand, as her fellow-liberals often complained, had no party spirit, none of that "fièvre d'espoir et d'angoisse" which a generous but one-sided man feels in the crash of revolutions. French revolutions are short cuts which are apt to take the lover of liberty a long way round; and in the preface to her *Petite Fadette*, a story written in 1848, George Sand expresses the profound and hopeless pity which led her at such moments to take refuge in the stillness and sanctity of Nature from the confusion of raving tongues.

"Dans les temps où le mal vient de ce que les hommes se méconnaissent et se détestent, la mission de l'artiste est de célébrer la douceur, la confiance, l'amitié, et de-rappeler ainsi aux hommes endurcis ou découragés, que les mœurs pures, les sentiments tendres, et l'équité primitive sont ou peuvent être encore de ce monde.

"Prêcher l'union quand on s'égorge c'est crier dans le désert. Il est des temps où les âmes sont si agitées qu'elles sont sourdes à toute exhortation directe. Depuis

ces journées de juin dont les événements actuels sont l'inévitable conséquence, l'auteur du conte qu'on va lire s'est imposé la tâche d'être *aimable*, dût-il en mourir de chagrin. Il a laissé railler ses *bergeries*, comme il avait laissé railler tout le reste, sans s'inquiéter des arrêts de certaine critique. Il sait qu'il a fait plaisir à ceux qui aiment cette note-là, et que faire plaisir à ceux qui souffrent du même mal que lui, à savoir l'horreur de la haine et des vengeances, c'est leur faire tout le bien qu'ils peuvent accepter : bien fugitif, soulagement passager, il est vrai, mais plus réel qu'une déclamation passionnée, et plus saisissant qu'une démonstration classique."

Again, George Sand keeps wonderfully clear of extravagant doctrines. *Horace*, a book which procured for her, she tells us, "une douzaine d'ennemis bien conditionnés," contains a scathing exposure of the egoism, folly, and conceit which inflate the legitimate aspirations of poor but clever young Frenchmen into so bombastic an unreality. *Horace* was for a certain class in France what *The Book of Snobs* was for a certain class in England, a castigation after which the same meannesses could hardly be repeated in the same way.

Le Péché de M. Antoine is the book in which she deals most freely with the question of property. But her ideal remedy for the inequalities of its distribution turns out to be not communism, but co-operation, "communauté par association"—an idea which it was well worth while to preach in France, and which may yet have a great future before it if the existing re-

lations between Capital and Labour should ultimately break down.

Again, we remark that the characteristic moral of George Sand's books — the doctrine that every elevation, whether of a class or of an individual, must be effected primarily from *within*—is as strongly insisted on in the case of the working classes as in the somewhat similar case of the female sex. "Dans cette longue série," she says, "plusieurs ouvrages (je puis dire le plus grand nombre) ont été inspirés par le désir d'éclairer le peuple sur ses devoirs autant que sur ses droits." And, in fact, few of her books are without some example of a working man (or woman) whose self-reverence and self-control end by placing him on an acknowledged equality with those whose original station was far above his own. And, like the author of *Felix Holt*, George Sand is always anxious to show that a true rise in life does not necessarily consist in a man's quitting the class in which he was born, but rather in his rendering the appropriate work of that class worthy of any class by thoroughness, honesty, artistic or scientific skill. One book, *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, avowedly draws an ideal portrait, — suggested by the character of Agricol Perdiguier, "cabinetmaker and representative of the people," — of what the working man may be, and although we may think that this ideal artisan has somewhat the air of having been bathed in rose-water, we must acknowledge that the soundest method of benefiting

any class is to try to raise their own conceptions of what they ought eventually to become. "Pourquoi," she asks in her preface to the book in question—

"Pourquoi, en supposant que mon type fût trop idéalisé, n'aurais-je pas eu le droit de faire pour les hommes du peuple ce qu'on m'avait permis de faire pour ceux des autres classes? Pourquoi n'aurais-je pas tracé un portrait, le plus agréable et le plus sérieux possible, pour que tous les ouvriers intelligents et bons eussent le désir de lui ressembler? Depuis quand le roman est-il forcément la peinture de ce qui est, la dure et froide réalité des hommes et des choses contemporaines? Il en peut être ainsi, je le sais, et Balzac, un maître devant le talent duquel je me suis toujours incliné, a fait la *Comédie humaine*. Mais, tout en étant lié d'amitié avec cet homme illustre, je voyais les choses humaines sous un tout autre aspect, et je me souviens de lui avoir dit, à peu près à l'époque où j'écrivais le *Compagnon du Tour de France*: 'Vous faites la *Comédie humaine*. Ce titre est modeste; vous pourriez aussi bien dire le *drame*, la *tragédie humaine*. Oui, me répondit-il; et vous, vous faites l'épopée humaine. Cette fois, repris-je, le titre serait trop relevé. Mais je voudrais faire l'*églogue humaine*, le *poème*, le *roman humain*. En somme, vous voulez et savez peindre l'homme tel qu'il est sous vos yeux, soit! Moi, je me sens porté à le peindre tel que je souhaite qu'il soit, tel que je crois qu'il doit être.'"

This unconscious repetition of the well-known criticism of Aristotle upon Sophocles and Euripides illustrates not only the relation of George Sand to Balzac, but the manner in which she consciously

modified or selected from the realities around her under the influence of a meditative idealism and an ethical purpose.

II. Passing on to the cognate topic of George Sand's treatment of the duties and position of *women*, we find that the distinction between the two periods of her writings, between what we have called the Romances of Search and the Romances of Exposition, is very marked. Her first few books were written when the world seemed crumbling around her, when distressing doubt had succeeded to Christian ecstasy, and a most unsuitable and painful marriage to the tranquil affections of her convent and her country home. These books, of which *Lélia* is the type, are the cry of a bewildered child for the light; they are the dizzy and Byronic phase of a nature essentially just and serene. Their style gave them a popularity which their author did not anticipate, and which she hardly desired. But it is not from these immature and dreamy productions that she ought to be judged.

In the Romances of Exposition, of which *Consuelo* is one of the earliest, and one of the best, examples, we find the question of Women's Rights treated in an eminently sound spirit; that is, we find a series of impressive but temperate protests against such injustices towards women as are sanctioned in France by society and law, but coupled herewith a continual encouragement to women to begin by developing and respecting

themselves—to *deserve* at any rate the respect of men, and to be confident that the state of any class of human beings will ultimately conform itself to their intrinsic deserts. This is the chief lesson of Consuelo's history; the child of an unknown father and of a gipsy tramp—the struggling singer at the opera of licentious towns—she rises by the sheer force of her own modest self-respect to a position of acknowledged moral greatness which attracts the affection and reverence of all classes of men.

In a series of works, one of whose main themes is the power which women possess of elevating their character, and rectifying the injustices of their position by the exercise of “self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,” it is painful to observe the frequent recurrence of the pervading fault of French literature—even of much of that literature which is meant to have, and has, a direct moral tendency—namely, a want of reticence and delicacy in matters connected with the relation between the sexes. Probably this disagreeable characteristic of so many of the best French books should in great measure be considered simply as a branch of that general want of dignity and reserve to which the French character is so unfortunately prone. That character is, of course, as capable of purity and refinement as the English, but a Frenchman who lacks these qualities is more likely to show it than an Englishman; because he degenerates in the direction, not of sullen stolidity, but of

complacent effusiveness—a “*Trunkenheit ohne Wein*” which leads him to interlard his life and literature with uninteresting tears, needless embraces, and remarks in the worst taste.

George Sand is capable of maintaining a level of lofty and militant purity; many of her books are wholly free from any kind of taint; but in others we feel the need of that instinctive incapacity to dwell on anything gross or morbid which is the glory of the best English literature, and of that literature almost alone. It should be observed, however, that one accusation, which has been brought against George Sand's novels, that they tend to bring the institution of marriage into contempt, can certainly not be maintained. Few authors have more convincingly insisted on the paramount excellence of a single, a permanent, a wedded affection. Few have more unshrinkingly exposed the misery which follows on the caprices of selfish and transitory passion. There are, indeed, passages in her works, where certain incidents of marriage which French opinion tolerates, and especially the infidelity of the husband to the wife, too lightly regarded in that country, are assailed with indignant eloquence. But shall we in England be concerned to defend a social state in which the old conception of the sanctity of marriage is retained just so far as to render indissoluble a union contracted without love, and maintained without fidelity? does not an institution like this need some purification

before it can be justifiably acquiesced in as unalterable or preached as divine ?

George Sand's own life forms a curious commentary on many social questions. To put the kernel of the position in a few words, she was greatly superior to almost all the Frenchmen of her time both in character and intellect, while at the same time she was subject to many weaknesses characteristic of the feminine mind. The result is, that when we consider any controversy, speculative or emotional, between her and the men about her, we are for the most part constrained to take her view, while yet we feel this view to be in some way unfamiliar to us, and in itself incomplete. The lioness has succeeded in imposing upon us her picture of the subjugated man ; we cannot deny its *vraisemblance* ; we can only say that we are not accustomed to see the group drawn in that position. And perhaps there is some poetical justice in the fact that the French, with their perpetual talk about women, and pursuit of them, should at last, as it were, have fallen in with a woman so very much too strong for each and all of them.

I believe that one single characteristic of George Sand's, as admitted by herself, is enough to explain the painful series of collisions between her and some of her once dearest friends. The fact is that she was apt to idealise people for a time, and then to *cease* to idealise them. It is obvious that nothing is more disagreeable than this. We can endure a want of

appreciation—reflecting that it is not given to all to be able to appreciate us—but that a woman who has taken an enthusiastic and emotional view of our character and abilities should suddenly begin to judge us in a calm manner, and indicate obvious defects, this is, indeed, enough to lash our self-love into fury. And if anything could make it worse, it would be to see the woman in question, whose intellectual superiority to us seems already a breach of the implied contract between the sexes, move on tranquilly occupied with the accomplishment of her destiny, reserving merely the right of describing us fictively in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. A feminine Goethe is more than mankind can endure, and there is much that is like Goethe in the emotional history of George Sand.

When, however, we consider in a more general way the treatment of love in her romances, we do not find any *parti pris*, or one-sidedness of view, interfering with her power of developing the history of that passion under the most diverse forms. In this respect, indeed, she seems to me unsurpassed. It so happens that most of our great English novelists—Miss Austen, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray—have had but a thin vein of experience or imagination in this direction. Charlotte Brontë in the past, George Meredith, and the greatest name of all, George Eliot, in the present, afford better examples of the light in which love presents itself to an English artist. But English dignity and reticence form an ever-present and impas-

sable limit to their descriptive skill. In George Eliot, for instance, with all her profound knowledge of the heart, there is always a certain austerity and reserve, a subordination of amatory to ethical situations; there are no *débordements*, no *eris d'amour et d'angoisse*; nay, the only love letter which I can recall in her works was written by Mr. Casaubon. I believe that this spirit of dignity in literature makes the highest and best literature now existing in the world; but in this, as in other ways, *noblesse oblige*, and it is plain that a French author has a much wider field to work in.

The names of Rousseau, Benjamin Constant, Mme. de Staël, Balzac, Victor Hugo, occur at once as those of authors who have not merely described love in its commoner forms, but have done something to extend our conception of its variety and power. But George Sand seems to me to take a wider range than any one of these. The *Nouvelle Héloïse* is scarcely fuller of mournful and philosophic sentiment than the *Lettres d'un Voyageur* or the *Lettres à Marie*. *Adolphe* is not more intense or hopeless than *Le Dernier Amour*. *Corinne* and *Delphine*, with all the eloquence and enthusiasm of their passion, are not more eloquent or more enthusiastic than *La Daniella*. *La Cousine Bette* is not more true or more terrible than *Leone Leoni*. Nor can any of Victor Hugo's contrasts between stainless innocence and environing evil outdo the simplicity and dignity of *Consuelo*.

We might extend this list much farther; but we

are here only concerned to show that George Sand is before all things *catholie* in her conception of human passion; that her romances are not mere illustrations of some favourite theory or special pleadings in defence of some personal cause.

There is no doubt one form of love which occurs oftenest in her books, especially where a woman is telling her own story — namely, the protective and admiring compassion which a woman of strong nature may feel for a gifted but weak or faulty man. This form of affection was abundantly illustrated by George Sand's own history; and seems to be allied to that eager maternal instinct which was the dominant emotion of her life; yet we may perceive in her also a capacity, which her career on earth was not permitted to develop, of feeling love in its more normal and satisfactory form, in which the instinct of the woman is to absorb herself in a reverent devotion to the man, while his corresponding instinct is to reverence this very devotion in her, as a token of her worthiness rather than of his own.

The conclusion of *Mademoiselle Merquem*, a novel whose heroine much resembles George Sand herself, illustrates what I mean. Mlle. Merquem, won at length after a long and respectful courtship, is addressing the husband of her choice, who here repeats her words and adds his comment thereupon.

“ ‘N'oubliez pas,’ she says, ‘que j'ai été longtemps une personne raisonnable, et souvenez-vous que la raison com-

mande d'être absolument dévoué et soumis à ce que l'on aime par-dessus tout. J'ai accepté l'amour, non comme un égarement et une faiblesse, mais comme une sagesse et une force dont, après quelque doute de moi-même, j'ai été fière de me sentir capable. Chaque jour qui s'est écoulé depuis ce premier jour de confiance et de joie m'a rendue plus sûre de moi-même, plus fière de mon choix, plus reconnaissante envers vous. A présent, commandez-moi ce que vous voudrez, puisque je ne connais plus qu'un plaisir en ce monde ; celui de vous obéir.'

"Je dus accepter cet abandon absolu, continué, irrévocable de sa volonté. Le refuser eût été le méconnaître. Je lui ai juré et je me suis juré à moi-même que je me servais de cette possession de son âme pour faire d'elle la plus respectée et la plus heureuse des femmes. Je me mépriserais profondément le jour où je croirais y avoir le moindre mérite. Avec une telle compagne la vie est un rêve du ciel. Jamais pareille égalité d'âme ne fut le partage d'une créature humaine. J'ai trouvé en elle un ami sérieux, solide dans toutes les épreuves, spontanément généreux et prudent, comme si son doux et profond regard embrassait à la fois les deux faces du vrai dans l'appréciation de toutes les choses de la vie. . . . Peut-être ne sait-on pas à quel degré de charme et de mérite pourrait s'élever la femme bien douée, si on la laissait mûrir, et si elle-même avait la patience d'attendre son développement complet pour entrer dans la vie complète. On les marie trop jeunes, elles sont mères avant d'avoir cessé d'être des enfants, on les élève, d'ailleurs, de manière à prolonger cette enfance toute la vie ; aussi ont-elles perdu toute puissance réelle et toute action légitime dans la société."

Nor is George Sand unable to rise to that highest

form of earthly passion in which its personal elements seem to fade and disappear, and it becomes not so much a desire as a revelation, an inlet into some supernal world, approachable only through the annihilation of self.

In the *Comtesse de Rudolstadt*,—an ill-constructed but a noble story,—there is a passage where Consuelo is called upon to choose, as she supposes, between love and duty. She has been led by the priests of a secret society through subterranean halls filled with the implements and memorials of all tortures and tyrannies that have been practised upon men; the misery of the world has been manifested to her with one appalling shock, and she has resolved to renounce all personal happiness for a life-long devotion to the cause of the wretched and oppressed. After a noble appeal to her lover not to hinder but to strengthen her in her high resolve, the fusion between earthly emotion and religious aspiration effects itself in a burst of song, and the long story of her fortunes leaves her with the same words upon her lips which first revealed to herself and to the world of music that music was the passion of her soul.

“L’enthousiasme de Consuelo était porté au comble; les paroles ne lui suffisaient plus pour l’exprimer. Une sorte de vertige s’empara d’elle, et, ainsi qu’il arrivait aux pythonisses, dans le paroxysme de leurs crises divines, de se livrer à des cris et à d’étranges fureurs, elle fut entraînée à manifester l’émotion qui la débordait par l’expression qui

lui était la plus naturelle. Elle se mit à chanter d'une voix éclatante et dans un transport au moins égal à celui qu'elle avait éprouvé en chantant ce même air à Venise, en public pour la première fois de sa vie, et en présence de Marcello et de Porpora :

“ ‘I cieli immensi narrano
Del grande Iddio la gloria!’ ”

“ Le chant lui vint sur les lèvres, parce qu'il est peut-être l'expression la plus naïve et la plus saisissante que la musique ait jamais donnée à l'enthousiasme religieux. Mais Consuelo n'avait pas le calme nécessaire pour contenir et diriger sa voix ; après ces deux vers, l'intonation devint un sanglot dans sa poitrine, elle fondit en larmes et tomba sur ses genoux.”

III. The mention of *Consuelo* may serve as our point of transition from George Sand's treatment of Love to her treatment of Art. For the æsthetic history of Consuelo, as contrasted with that of Corilla and Anzoleto, is perhaps the best example of the lesson which in these romances is so often repeated, that Art, like everything else which is worth having or worth doing, is the result and outcome of a certain inward and spiritual state ; that to good Art moral qualities are as necessary as intellectual ; that those who fail in Art fail oftenest through egoism and ambition, through license and vanity ; while those who succeed succeed through delight in their work and devotion to an impersonal and lofty aim.

To take instances almost at random ; the art of acting is treated much in this way in the *Château des*

Désertes, and (incidentally) in *Narcisse*; authorship in *Horace*; mosaic-work in *Les Maîtres Mosaïstes*; portrait-painting in *Le Château de Pietordu*; landscape-painting in *La Daniella* and *Mlle. Merquem*; and, to end with a characteristic example from one of her latest books, the art of *bird-stuffing*, in that capital child's story *Les Ailes de Courage*. George Sand, in fact, insists as constantly as Mr. Ruskin on the great maxim which lies at the root of art; that in order to represent anything well we must love to look at it, in order to do anything well we must love to do it, quite apart from all thought of rivalry, or profit, or fame.

Her own artistic history was as consistent with her convictions as the tyranny of circumstances would allow. That is to say, she was indifferent to *fame*,—greatly disliking its concrete form, general recognition and notoriety,—and she at no time shaped or modified her published opinions with a view to profit. But she was forced to write much faster than she liked that she might earn money—not in order to enjoy wealth or luxury, for which she felt a singular indifference—but in order to secure her own independence and the education of her children. She had also a feminine bias towards almsgiving, which went so far that in later life she denied herself the pleasure and instruction of travel that she might have more to give away.

The results of this excessive haste are most marked in her earlier writings. She has not had time to make

them short. The grace of her language never fails, but she is often tedious and full of repetitions, and before she has gained experience of life she tends to be fantastic and unreal. Much of *Lélia*, though the book created so great a sensation, seems now unreadably dull. As time goes on her style improves; its dignity and melody remain; its *longueurs* gradually disappear. From *Consuelo* onwards she seems able to say whatever she wishes in admirable form. Her tendency to religious disquisition continues often to interfere with the march of her romances, but in the diction itself there is little which either Frenchman or foreigner has censured. With maturity she gained simplicity; her pastoral romances are models of pastoral speech; and her latest works, *Flamarande*, *La Tour de Percemont*, etc., are almost as concise and clear as Voltaire himself.

But certain characteristics remain unchanged through the five-and-forty years of her literary life. In almost all the books there is the same air of unlaboured spontaneity and irresistible inspiration; in almost all there is the same subordination of the verisimilitude of minor events to the development of one central character, one dominant idea, one absorbing passion. And the defects of a class of romances which aim so high are almost inseparable from their merits. Some novelists, like some painters, have preferred to confine themselves to effects of twilight or candlelight, that so their colour within these limits may be wholly natural and true;

a wider range of light and shade brings added difficulties of harmonious representation ; and those who would "set the blazing sun in heaven" must be content to sacrifice much truth of local colouring if they would maintain, with the imperfect means at their disposal, some likeness of the irreproducible gradations between Nature's blackness and her glow.

IV. I have been endeavouring so to arrange these remarks as to proceed as it were from without inwards in our review of George Sand's life and work. From considering her relation to the political world about her, to the other sex, and to the small confraternity of art, we pass now to the subjects on which her reverie habitually dwelt—nature first, and then all which lies beneath nature for a reverent and meditative mind. She approached nature from many sides. As the owner of a country property, which for many years she managed herself, she was able to give to her rustic pictures a vivid reality, which a Parisian like Balzac could not by any study achieve. All the world knows *La Petite Fadette*, and the rest of that series of gentle idylls, of which *La Mare au Diable* and *Nanon* are, perhaps, the most touching. They form the nearest French parallel to Wordsworth's *Waggoner* and *Peter Bell*. George Sand has also what Wordsworth had not—a subtle feeling for the charm which lies in the transformation of meditative observation into definite science: the moment when one, who has long pored over some fragment of nature for his delight, discovers

that he has learnt something which few or none have learnt before him. I know no French novel in which science is treated with a profounder sympathy than in *Valvèdre*,—a work which supplies a corrective to all of morbid that *Valentine* and *Indiana* contain,—so full is it of matter and wisdom, so natural and complete is the triumph which science, simplicity, and virtue gain over immoral and egoistic languor. And, to pass over a host of similar instances, one of the last and simplest of her stories, *Marianne*, culminates in a moment at which the girl's gentle and joyous observation of nature is found to have laid for her the basis of a more scientific knowledge of the plants which she loves. This last sketch is so slight that I feel half ashamed to dwell on it; and yet it has a peculiar charm; a picture drawn in great old age by the world-famous writer, of a girl riding about the country as she herself had done in youth, and entering, in the same simple and profound fashion, into the teaching of nature and her joy. There is something touching in this "link of natural piety," which connects the youth and age of one, whose ardent genius had impelled her in the meantime into forms of life so remote from quiet Berry and the shades of the Vallée Noire, and who yet returned to that still home, and spent life's long declension among the gardens where she had played as a child. More, perhaps, than any author of our century, save Wordsworth himself, she deserves Claudian's praises of that ancient and home-keeping man—

“*Ingentem meminit parvo qui germine quercum,
Aequaevumque videt consenuisse nemus.*”

And her books, in many places, show how deeply this life-long refuge of Nohant had tranquillised her soul—how often the cares and loves of life fell from her in the presence of Nature’s slow consolations, and her abiding calm.

V. It was, then, in a life which, though often profoundly agitated, had yet a certain unity and background of peace, that George Sand experienced that series of religious changes and awakenings which, as she herself has told us, constitute her essential history and her true career.

The first stage was an unusual one. She was brought up by a grandmother and a tutor who held Voltairian views, but did not wish to impress them upon a child. Consequently they left her with no religious teaching at all. Some stories, impartially told her, about Christ and Jupiter, were all the theology that was impressed on the blank paper of her mind. Thereupon she did what a philosopher might have expected her to do. Not being told that there was a God, she found it necessary to invent one. Few passages in literature are more touching than the pages where she describes how she felt, at the age of ten, the need of some Divine Being to love and worship; and how, in her uncertainty between Christ and the gods of Greece, she feared that all were alike unreal; and how, in some half-waking vision, her inner need clothed

itself in a deity whom she imagined for herself, to worship him; and *Corambé*—neither male nor female, neither human nor quite divine—hovered between heaven and earth in her day-long dream, willingly incarnating himself sometimes to assuage some misery of men, or sometimes punished at the hands of a supreme power by an enforced sojourn among the unhappy mortals to whom he had shown too much mercy.

To him, upon a secret and woodland shrine, she sacrificed not by slaying but by setting free; and when a bird released upon his altar lingered for a moment among the branches of the shadowing maple-tree, she took the sign as a token of *Corambé's* acceptance of the benign and bloodless offering:—and those who like may fancy that some Power was there to welcome the unblemished gift, and to fill with gladness that innocent sanctuary in the heart of a child.

But the little *Aurore* grew older, and was sent to the convent of the *Anglaises* at Paris, where Catholicism was presented in its most winning form by the religious English ladies, to whom the education of some of the best-born girls in France and in our own islands was at that time entrusted. For a long time *Aurore* withstood their influence; she became the ringleader of all such wild and innocent mischief as the convent knew; she was enrolled among the *diaboles*; she seemed as far as possible from becoming *sage*.

But her hour came—the hour which in some form or other probably comes to every ardent and reverent soul—the hour of the dedication of self to a new-felt and absorbing power.

In a fit of weariness, after some long frolic, she had strayed into the convent chapel. She sat through the evening service in a state of strange abstraction and serenity. What followed shall be described in her own words:—

“L’heure s’avavançait, la prière était sonnée, on allait fermer l’église. J’avais tout oublié. Je ne sais ce qui se passait en moi. Je respirais une atmosphère d’une suavité indicible, et je la respirais par l’âme plus encore que par les sens. Tout à coup je ne sais quel ébranlement se produisit dans tout mon être, un vertige passe devant mes yeux comme une fleur blanche dont je me sens enveloppée. Je crois entendre une voix murmurer à mon oreille : Tolle, lege. Je me retourne, croyant que c’est Marie Alicia qui me parle. J’étais seule.

“Je ne me fis pas d’orgueilleuse illusion, je ne crus point à un miracle. Je me rendis fort bien compte de l’espèce d’hallucination où j’étais tombée. Je n’en fus ni enivrée ni effrayée. Je ne cherchais ni à l’augmenter ni à m’y soustraire. Seulement, je sentis que la foi s’emparait de moi, comme je l’avais souhaité, par le cœur. J’en fus si reconnaissante, si ravie, qu’un torrent de larmes inonda mon visage. Je sentis encore que j’aimais Dieu, que ma pensée embrassait et acceptait pleinement cet idéal de justice, de tendresse et de sainteté que je n’avais jamais révoqué en doute, mais avec lequel je ne m’étais jamais trouvée en communication directe; je sentis enfin cette communication

s'établir soudainement, comme si un obstacle invincible se fût abîmé entre le foyer d'ardeur infinie et le feu assoupi dans mon âme. Je voyais un chemin vaste, immense, sans bornes, s'ouvrir devant moi ; je brûlais de m'y élancer. Je n'étais plus retenue par aucun doute, par aucune froideur. La crainte d'avoir à me reprendre, à railler en moi-même au lendemain la fougue de cet entraînement ne me vint pas seulement à la pensée. J'étais de ceux qui vont sans regarder derrière eux, qui hésitent longtemps devant un certain Rubicon à passer, mais qui, en touchant la rive, ne voient déjà plus celle qu'ils viennent de quitter."

Her conversion was complete. It was followed by months of ecstatic happiness and self-denial, and only the wise reluctance of the nuns in charge prevented the enthusiastic girl from insisting on taking the veil. At last her grandmother removed her from the convent. But her faith and her wish to become a nun persisted long. Her first shock arose from the perusal of Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, a book recommended to her by her confessor, but which she found to be in so direct an opposition to the *Imitatio Christi*, on which her devotion had long been fed, that she was led to doubt the truth and unity of a system which could thus be authoritatively expounded in two such different senses. But she seemed to be gliding gently into a tranquil Theism, when all at once her troubles came. Her grandmother died. Her home at Nohant was broken up. Her father's family were alienated by her mother's temper. Her mother was worse than no guardian to the sensitive and inexperi-

enced girl. In her distress and loneliness she allowed a M. Dudevant to persuade her that he would be a solid and lasting friend. She married him, and thus committed the greatest blunder of her life, not through excess, but through defect of emotional sensibility. For she should never have married M. Dudevant. She never loved him, and he never loved anybody. He drank ; he kept low company ; he was openly unfaithful to his wife. After years of miserable union, and years of informal separation, the wife procured a judicial separation, and the custody of the children was left in her hands. But during the wretched years, from 1826 to 1836,—years during which other sins besides those of M. Dudevant disturbed her inward peace, and, enlightened by her own sorrows, her eyes opened upon the sorrows of the world,—her faith was deeply shaken ; she lost her trust in the moral government of the universe ; her spiritual life became a mere voice of protest and cry for light to a sealed and unanswering heaven.

Slowly the answer came.

“By-and-by [says Mazzini] her thoughts elevate and clear themselves : her looks turn oftener to the future ; the religious sentiment, so prominent in George Sand, becomes more and more developed and intense. The turbid stream purifies itself in mounting towards heaven, and falls again in dew. Calm succeeds to storm ; the very shadow of scepticism has disappeared before faith ; faith, sad and without the spring of youth, for its torch does not shine on this side of the tomb ; but strong, and unshakeable as all

religious conviction. Our earthly life is not the *Right* to happiness, it is the *Duty* of development; sorrow is not Evil, since it stimulates and purifies: virtue is constancy in devotion; all error passes away; truth is eternal, and must, by a law of Providence, triumph sooner or later in the individual as in humanity. George Sand has learnt these things, and repeats them to us with the sweet and impressive voice of a sister. There is still, as in the sound of the Æolian harp, an echo of a past agony; but the voice of the angel preponderates."

Mazzini here has merely stated the change which took place, without attempting to assign its reason. Perhaps this silence is wise. In a universe which is of so mixed a character that optimism and pessimism are both of them plausible views, it seems almost futile to try to determine what thought or fact it is which makes for each man the transition from despair to faith. There are plenty of phenomena to lead anybody to any conclusion.

It is enough to give her own account of the means by which this change was effected; which means she believed to be divine grace, sent in answer to prolonged and earnest prayer:—

"Je crois encore à ce que les chrétiens appellent la grâce. Qu'on nomme comme on voudra les transformations qui s'opèrent en nous quand nous appelons énergiquement le principe divin de l'infini au secours de notre faiblesse; que ce bienfait s'appelle secours ou assimilation; que notre aspiration s'appelle prière ou exaltation d'esprit, il est certain que l'âme se retrempe dans les élans religieux. Je l'ai

toujours éprouvé d'une manière si évidente pour moi, que j'aurais mauvaise grâce à en matérialiser l'expression sous ma plume. Prier comme certains dévots pour demander au ciel la pluie ou le soleil, d'est-à-dire des pommes de terre et des écus, pour conjurer la grêle ou la foudre, la maladie ou la mort, c'est de l'idolâtrie pure ; mais lui demander le courage, la sagesse, l'amour, c'est ne pas intervertir l'ordre de ses lois immuables, c'est puiser à un foyer qui ne nous attirerait pas sans cesse si, par sa nature, il n'était pas capable de nous réchauffer."

Through whatever agency, the change took place. For the rest of her long life George Sand was not strictly a Christian, but one of those who must be ranged along with Christians in any reckoning of the spiritual forces of the world. For we know that the true controversy is no longer between those within and those without the walls of any given church, but on a wider scale and involving profounder issues. It is a controversy between Spiritualism and Materialism, between those who base their life upon God and immortality, and those who deny or are indifferent to both. And the spiritual cause has the more need of champions now that a distinct *moral* superiority can no longer be claimed on either side. Perhaps the loftiest and most impressive strain of ethical teaching which is to be heard in England now comes from one who invokes no celestial assistance, and offers to virtue no ultimate recompense of reward.¹ The Stoics are again

¹ This Essay appeared in George Eliot's lifetime.

among us ; the stern disinterestedness of their "counsels of perfection" is enchaining some of our noblest souls. But the moral elevation of any portion of mankind tends to the elevation of all. And although to those who rest tranquil in their belief in immortality this stoical view will appear extreme, one-sided, hopeless, impossible to man, it will yet teach them no longer to speak as if virtue were to be repaid with pleasures which it needs no virtue to enjoy. They will rather claim that a spirit of ceaseless aspiration shall be satisfied with a ceaseless progress ; that virtue shall be rewarded by her own continuance, "the wages of going on, and not to die."

Few writers have dwelt on this prospect with a more sustained and humble aspiration than George Sand. I quote one of numberless passages :—

"Saintes promesses des cieux où l'on se retrouve et où l'on se reconnaît, vous n'êtes pas un vain rêve. Si nous ne devons pas aspirer à la béatitude des purs esprits du pays des chimères, si nous devons entrevoir toujours au-delà de cette vie un travail, un devoir, des épreuves et une organisation limitée dans ses facultés vis-à-vis de l'infini, du moins il nous est permis par la raison, et il nous est commandé par le cœur de compter sur une suite d'existences progressives en raison de nos bons désirs. Les saints de toutes les religions qui nous crient du fond de l'antiquité de nous dégager de la matière pour nous élever dans la hiérarchie céleste des esprits ne nous ont pas trompés quant au fond de la croyance admissible à la raison moderne. Nous pensons aujourd'hui que, si nous sommes immortels,

c'est à la condition de revêtir sans cesse des organes nouveaux pour compléter notre être, qui n'a probablement pas le droit de devenir un pur esprit ; mais nous pouvons regarder cette terre comme un lieu de passage et compter sur un réveil plus doux dans le berceau qui nous attend ailleurs. De mondes en mondes, nous pouvons, en nous dégageant de l'animalité qui combat ici-bas notre spiritualisme, nous rendre propres à revêtir un corps plus pur, plus approprié aux besoins de l'âme, moins combattu et moins entravé par les infirmités de la vie humaine telle que nous la subissons ici-bas."

With some such thoughts as these we should close our contemplation of the earthly career of a strong, a militant, an eager soul. To one who traces the victories of such a soul, in this dimness of her captivity, that which she hath done will seem "but earnest of the things that she shall do ;" we imagine her delivered from the bewildering senses, the importunate passions of the flesh, no longer "tormented," but satisfied, with the things of God ; glad in those spiritual kinships and that inward calm towards which "her continual longing has been her continual voice."

VICTOR HUGO.

*Ὅσσαν ἐπ' Οὐλύμπῳ μέμασαν θέμεν, αὐτὰρ ἐπ' Ὅσση
Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἔν' οὐρανὸς ἀμβατὸς εἴη.*

‘DANS le domaine poétique,” says the sternest of French critics, “l’autorité de l’Angleterre ne vaut pas moins que l’autorité de la Grèce dans le domaine de la sculpture.” And we may fairly accept this dictum of Gustave Planche’s as just, and maintain that in no country of modern Europe has so much good poetry or good criticism on poetry been produced as in England. The more important, then, is the fact that an Englishman who, like Mr. Swinburne, stands in the very foremost rank both of our poets and of our critics, should have proclaimed with all his eloquence that M. Hugo is the greatest of living poets—nay, more, “the name that is above every name in lyric song”—a Master after whom our age will be called, as Shakespeare’s age is called after Shakespeare. And Mr. Swinburne, though he may write extravagantly, never writes at random. We feel that in his wildest flights he has yet a grasp upon the very spirit of poetry, a wide, exact, and penetrating knowledge of the greatest

achievements of the human imagination, which may well make us pause where we cannot follow him, and believe that he sees more than we. His judgment of M. Hugo has prompted me to a long and careful study of that author's works, in the course of which I have seemed to understand how Mr. Swinburne's abounding poetical power runs over, as it were, upon the poets whom he criticises, and glorifies them with his own glow. Such criticism is generous, eloquent, suggestive; yet it leaves room for a soberer estimate, which shall refer the works in question as much to a moral as to an artistic standard.

I think, then,—to begin by a broad expression of views which I hope to develop in some detail,—that M. Hugo's central distinction lies in his unique power over the French language, greatly resembling Mr. Swinburne's power over the English language, and manifesting itself chiefly in beauty and inventiveness of poetical form and melody. In prose the same power supplies an endless fertility of rhetoric, and a countless store of epigrams which evince the faculty of manipulating rather than of originating thought. Moreover, a singular vividness and intensity of imagination, with a command over the striking incidents of life and the broad outlines of character, somewhat akin to the generalship with which he marshals his stately words and phrases, render M. Hugo a great master of scenic effect—of that shock and collision of pathos, horror, and surprise, to which in plays and romances we give the name of melodrama.

In his moral nature we shall find much that is strong, elevated, and tender; a true passion for France, a true sympathy for the poor and the oppressed, a true fondness for children. Farther than this it will be hard to go; so plain will it be that the egoism which penetrates M. Hugo's character is a bar to all higher sublimity, and has exercised a disastrous effect on his intellectual as well as on his moral career.

In calling M. Hugo egoistic I am far from accusing him of vulgar self-seeking — of an undue regard for any tangible form of personal advantage. What I mean is that he seems never to forget himself; that whatever truth he is pursuing, whatever scene he describes, his own attitude in regard to it is never absent from his mind. And hence it results that all other objects are unconsciously made secondary to the great object of making an impression of the kind desired. From the smallest details of style up to the most serious steps in political conduct this preoccupation is visible. It was the same spirit which prompted the poet to begin one of his most solemn elegiac poems with the repeated assertion "that it should never be said that *he* kept silence, that *he* did not send a sombre strophe to sit before his children's tomb"—and which prompted the politician to resign in a moment the trust which Paris had committed to him because the Assembly would not listen to him with the respect which he thought his due.

The sources of this self-absorption—this “auto-theism,” as a French critic has called it—are to some extent obvious, and M. Hugo has but yielded more openly than some others to a temptation which has come to him with unusual force.

Among the dangers of advancing culture lies a fact which at first sight appears wholly an advantage—namely, the increased respect and attention paid to intellect—to artists, men of science, and men of letters. In England the importance of this class has of late grown rapidly, owing not only to the increase in the number of persons able to appreciate them, but to the tranquillity of the country, which has afforded few impressive careers to the warrior or the statesman. In France the man of letters has long held a position of unnatural prominence. For the artificial equality which the Revolution produced has left so few leaders to whom the people can naturally look, that the literary guild has in some sense replaced both priesthood and aristocracy, and in times of stress and tumult poets and pamphleteers have more than once been called to the helm of the State. A career like Lamartine’s may well justify Comte’s insistence on a separation between the functions of the man of thought and the man of action. But the danger which here concerns us is of a more general kind. It consists in the fact that the artist and poet are much more easily injured by deference than by neglect. The more inward and intimate is the merit for which we praise a

man, the harder is it for us to praise him with good taste, or for him to receive the praise with dignity. We can applaud the great actions of a general without injuring his capacity for war; but if we dwell too much on the delicate thoughts of a poet—of a man whose claim to represent his fellow-men is mainly that his sensibilities are more exquisite than theirs, his ideal higher, his moral sense more true—there is much fear lest we injure in him what we admire, lest his emotions no longer seem to flow spontaneously into music, and to be *overheard*, but rather to be adjusted to the expectations of his admiring public. Other intellectual fields have cognate dangers. In the domain of music we are the grieved spectators of the enormous self-applause of the most conspicuous composer of our time. And science herself—once the type of lofty and impersonal labour—has learnt sometimes to speak with brazen lips, and to defame all sanctities but her own. On living examples of the contrary temper it would be indecorous to dwell. It is enough to recognise that the evil of which I have spoken is not universal; that England has not lost her tradition which couples modesty with greatness; that in this age of desecrating publicity it is still possible for a man, with ears open to the world's infinite voices, to be ignorant only of the praises which salute his name.¹

¹ The allusion to Mr. Darwin may be made explicit now that he is no longer among us.

How confidently, on the other hand, M. Hugo has arranged all voices of heaven and earth in a cantata to his own glory may be seen from the following passage on the duties of the poet :—

“ Dans ses poèmes il mettrait les conseils au temps présent, les esquisses rêveuses de l’avenir ; le reflet, tantôt éblouissant, tantôt sinistre, des événements contemporains ; les panthéons, les tombeaux, les ruines, les souvenirs ; la charité pour les pauvres, la tendresse pour les misérables ; les saisons, le soleil, les champs, le mer, les montagnes ; les coups d’œil furtifs dans le sanctuaire de l’âme où l’on aperçoit sur un autel mystérieux, comme par la porte entr’ouverte d’une chapelle, toutes ces belles urnes d’or : la foi, l’espérance, la poésie, l’amour ; enfin il y mettrait cette profonde peinture du moi, qui est peut-être l’œuvre la plus large, la plus générale et la plus universelle qu’un penseur puisse faire.”

There is a sense in which these last words may be true. A man like Wordsworth, on whom unique sensibilities have bestowed as it were a new revelation, may perceive that his life’s object must be to explain to others what he sees and feels ; he may justifiably be wrapped up in this ; he may without rebuke even exaggerate the importance of the boon which he has to bestow. For it is not on himself that his heart is set, but on that of which he is the interpreter. But M. Hugo’s first thought is almost always of his own greatness ; his first care for his own glory. His teaching shifts from pole to pole ; the only lodestar to which it always turns is the poet himself. I do not

care to accumulate proofs of this. I will not quote from *William Shakespeare*, with its almost insane passages of inflated self-esteem, where the poet seems to intimate that the fourteen men whom he deigns to honour in former ages have been previous incarnations of himself. I will take a poem, in metrical form among our author's best, where the poet is expressing himself as plainly as the sublimity of his theme allows.

The *Ode à Olympio* (a barbarous name intended to imply M. Hugo's analogy to Jupiter) is obviously, and one may say avowedly, an address by the poet to himself. The address is put into the mouth of a nameless friend, and is thus introduced:—

“Un jour l'ami qui reste à ton cœur qu'on déchire
Contemplait tes malheurs,
Et tandis qu'il parlait ton sublime sourire
Se mêlait à ses pleurs.”

One hardly knows which to admire most, the servile tears of the man of straw, or the poet's description of his own sublime smile. “Te voilà,” says the friend—

“Te voilà sous les pieds des envieux sans nombre
Et des passants rieurs,
*Toi dont le front superbe accoutumait à l'ombre
Les fronts inférieurs !*”

After further allusions to “ton front calme et tonnant,” “ton nom rayonnant,” etc., the friend continues—

“Tous ceux qui de tes jours orageux et sublimes
S’approchent sans effroi,
Reviennent en disant qu’ils ont vu des abîmes
En se penchant sur toi !

“Mais peut-être, à travers l’eau de ce gouffre immense
Et de ce cœur profond,
On verrait cette perle qu’on appelle innocence,
En regardant au fond !

“On s’arrête aux brouillards dont ton âme est voilée ;
Mais moi, juge et témoin,
Je sais qu’on trouverait une voûte étoilée
Si l’on allait plus loin !”

The critics naturally come in for a mild rejoinder.

“Ils auront bien toujours pour toi toute la haine
Des démons pour le dieu,
Mais un souffle éteindra leur bouche impure, pleine
De paroles de feu.

“Ils s’évanouiront, et la foule ravie
Verra, d’un œil pieux,
Sortir de ce tas d’ombre amassé par l’envie
Ton front majestueux !”

After this we find it difficult to be much interested in the universal benevolence of the poet’s abstract views. Critics have admired a prophetic passage in which, in the general rehabilitation of everybody, Belial grows so angelic that the Almighty is puzzled to distinguish him from Christ. But universality of appreciativeness is, in this nineteenth century, no longer surprising.

Many of us will feel that our sympathies have expanded so widely that we can enter into the point of view of the very devil,—so long as he says nothing unpleasant about ourselves.

And surely never was *amour propre* more watchful than M. Hugo's. To keep silence about him is almost as dangerous as to criticise him. Any suspicion of lukewarmness is met with the vigorous expression of a pain about which poets have perhaps said enough—the pain which they derive from the stupidity and jealousy of mankind. There is no doubt much truth in such complaints. A man of any emotional force and originality will be often misunderstood. Overvalued, perhaps, by some, he will be undervalued by others. The many forces that fight on the side of commonplace will unite to exaggerate his faults and to explain his virtues away. All this is a matter of course. Everything that is exceptional has its inconveniences. But troubles like these should be borne in silence; to dwell on them before the world is both unmanly and arrogant. He who sings of grief should sing of griefs which others also feel, and to which his song can bring consolation. There are, indeed, some cases, like Byron's or Shelley's, in which the poet's lot has been made so tragic by causes closely connected with his genius that we cannot wish him to keep silence. But M. Hugo's literary troubles have never been of this kind. They have rather been such as are naturally provoked by the assumption of the

leadership of a militant school in literature. A man who claims to rule by right of conquest must expect that the conquered persons will call him an usurper. We will not dwell on the petty histories of cabals and jealousies, alliances and discipleships, which have occupied too often the literary world of France. But we may well question whether either French literature or French society has really gained by the abolition of the old pre-eminence accorded to the accident of birth. Have wealth and talents shown themselves to be worthier objects of deference? Are they found to be more frequently united with that moral elevation to which we all desire to pay our chief respect? A plutocracy we may take to be an admitted evil, embodying the self-indulgence which is the weakness of an aristocracy without the sense of responsibility which ought to be its strength. And surely we are introducing a still worse element into our reconstructed society if we erect poets or dramatists into the heads of factions, each with his band of janissaries, who salute him in newspaper or theatre with preconcerted applause. There is no surer way of ruining a man than to thrust upon him a counterfeit greatness, and he who would play the part of Napoleon in the republic of letters can suffer no evil so disastrous as his own success.

In what terms an offended potentate can resent impartial opinion may be judged from the following lines, among the most forcible which M. Hugo has ever

written, and whose application is fixed, by an ingenuity of insult, upon one of the most just and scrupulous critics whom France has known :—

“Jeune homme, ce méchant fait une lâche guerre.
Ton indignation ne l'épouvante guère.
Crois-moi donc, laisse en paix, jeune homme au noble
cœur,
Ce Zoïle à l'œil faux, ce malheureux moqueur.
Ton mépris ? mais c'est l'air qu'il respire. Ta haine ?
La haine est son odeur, sa sueur, son haleine.
Il sait qu'il peut souiller sans peur les noms fameux,
Et que pour qu'on le touche il est trop venimeux.
Il ne craint rien : pareil au champignon difforme
Poussé dans une nuit au pied d'un chêne énorme,
Qui laisse les chevreaux autour de lui paissant
Essayer leur dent folle à l'arbuste innocent ;
Sachant qu'il porte en lui des vengeances trop sûres,
Tout gonflé de poison il attend les morsures.”

Literature has few expressions of rage and hatred more concentrated than this. But worse remains. Self is an idol to which a man must sacrifice not only his critics but his deities, and not only the present but the past. Retrospective jealousy knows no limitations. As M. Hugo has advanced in his self-worship the objects of his reverence have become fewer and fewer, and those noble admirations which make the very substance of our spiritual being have dropped one by one from his soul. In most cases his judgments are worth noticing only as illustrating his own moral decline. That M. Hugo, after admiring Virgil, should postpone

Virgil to Juvenal (because he can more easily pretend that he was once Juvenal himself), matters little to any one except M. Hugo. But when his faint praise falls upon authors who, though superior, are comparable to himself—when Racine and Corneille, for instance, are indicated as the mere forerunners of the author of *Cromwell* and *Ruy Blas*—a more serious protest is needed. I am no blind admirer of the great French tragedians. No English critic is likely to overlook their obvious faults and limitations. But I surely still have the best French judgments with me in believing that the moral world in which those classical poets have their being is one of such refinement and loftiness as M. Hugo has never known. How crude, how strained, in a word how melodramatic, are the ethical struggles and triumphs of his Marion, his Tisbe, his Hernani, compared with Racine's gentle magnanimities, and pure compassions, and cadences of delicate distress! We might as well compare a picture by Doré or Wiertz to a picture by Andrea del Sarto. And Corneille's strain is in a still higher mood. No other French dramatist has written a play "beau comme le Cid," because no other French dramatist has had a nature like Corneille's—a nature grave, reserved, and solitary, but cherishing as it were a hidden fervency and a secret habit of honour, and finding at last its longed-for outlet in that ringing tale of chivalry and war, of the ecstasies of heroic passion and the counterchange of love and death.

The society in which these men's genius was fostered may have been artificial, transitory, unjust. It may have been based upon the slavery of the Commons of France. But it contained within it certain ideals which France has lost and hardly has regained. A truer religion, a sounder polity, than Catholicism and Divine Right, may yet enlighten the eyes of French singers with a wider vision than of old. But M. Hugo is "singing before sunrise," and his horizon is lit rather with some shifting radiance of the northern lights than with a steady promise of the day.

Let us attempt to give distinctness to our mingled judgment of M. Hugo's character and powers, first by a short examination of the literary form of his poems, dramas, and romances ; and then by considering his political career, his personal emotions as revealed to us in his works ; and, lastly, his position with regard to the profoundest problems which affect mankind.

II.

The literary form in which M. Hugo's work, and especially his poetry, has been cast, presents much of interest. For we may take him as the leading representative of the romantic school so conspicuous in France during the first half of this century. And this school, beginning with wide pretensions, has ended, like some other revolutions in cognate arts, in little more than an improvement in technical procedure. Those re-

forms alone are permanent which are based on a thorough knowledge of the matter in hand, and it was to French versification that the Romanticists gave their most serious attention. Their professed study of the history and literature of other countries was seldom much more than a search for sensational incidents or novel themes for declamation. But their mastery of old French poetry led to a real re-discovery of disused metrical effects, and a real invention of new ones. And it is in these matters that M. Hugo was most truly the heir of this literary revolution; his naturally fine ear was taught and stimulated by the technical discussions which surrounded his early years.

It is worth while to dwell in some detail upon the improvements in versification which M. Hugo has successfully adopted, and of which he is in some degree himself the author. These improvements consist mainly in an increased richness of *rhyme* and an increased variety of *rhythm*.¹

First as to rhyme. Frenchmen, as we know, designate as *poor rhymes* most of such rhymes as English verse allows—namely, collocations of similar syllables beginning with different consonants, as *page* and *rage*, *nuit* and *instruit*. They give the name of *rich rhymes* to collocations of similar syllables beginning with the same consonant, as *éperdument* and *fir^ument*, *vile* and *ville*, which in English would not count as rhymes at all. This difference of taste seems partly to depend on the more intimate *liaison* existing in

¹ See Note A, p. 335.

French pronunciation between the consonant and the syllable which follows it—which syllable will often consist of a vowel sound very *rapidly* pronounced, like the terminations in the accented *é*, or very *indeterminately* pronounced, like the nasal terminations in *m* and *n*. If the consonant, which gives the whole character to terminations like these, differs in the two rhyming lines, there seems to be hardly enough substance left in the rhyme to satisfy the ear's desire for a recurring sound. This view is illustrated by such English rhymes as *alone* and *flown*, where an additional richness seems sometimes gained from the presence of the *l* in both the rhyming syllables. Mr. Swinburne affords a brilliant instance of this wealth of assonance in the following lines :—

“ As scornful Day represses
Night's void and vain caresses,
And from her duskier tresses
Unwinds the gold of his ;”

where the persistence of the *r* sound gives to the stanza a cumulative force which could hardly have been otherwise attained. This so-called *richness* of rhymes is found in M. Hugo's poems in wonderful profusion. In a page of his taken at random I find eleven rich rhymes to three poor ones ; in a page of Racine taken at random, seven rich rhymes and seven poor ones. A difference like this implies a wonderful command over language. But this is not all. A rhyme,

to give the greatest pleasure, should seem fortunately accidental; it must not depend too visibly upon a similarity of grammatical termination. Thus in English the words *me* and *sea* make a more satisfactory rhyme than *me* and *thee*, because we feel that *me* and *thee* are words formed in the same way, and that the poet is taking advantage of a coincidence which contains no element of surprise. *Arrow* and *narrow* make a better rhyme than *salvation* and *condemnation*, because in the latter pair of words we feel that a Latin termination supplies a consonance ready-made, and dwelling, so to speak, not in the essence of the words, but in their uninteresting accretion of final syllables. These considerations are still more important in French, where many large classes of words exist which have the same final syllables. I have not space for examples, but the most cursory comparison of M. Hugo with (for instance) Racine will show the admirable ingenuity of the romantic poet in this respect. It is strange indeed that, after the way in which the French and English tongues have been ransacked for centuries past, M. Hugo and Mr. Swinburne should have been able to introduce new rhymes by dozens, and not merely grotesque rhymes, which are easy to multiply, but rhymes which can be used in lofty poetry. M. Hugo's prodigious wealth of vocabulary, manifest throughout his works in many ways, is in nothing more manifest than in this.

The question of *metre* is a much more complex one.

Some attempt at explanation must be made, though the subject can only be treated here in the broadest and most elementary manner. Speaking generally, then, we know that among the Greeks and Romans accent and quantity both existed, but the structure of classical Greek and Latin poetry was determined almost entirely by quantity, a certain number of long and short syllables, in one of certain arrangements, being needed to make up a verse. The poetry of modern Europe is for the most part formed on this model, with the substitution of accent for quantity; that is to say, the definite arrangement of feet is retained, but accented syllables fill the places formerly occupied by long ones. In modern English poetry there is always a definite skeleton of metre, containing a definite number of accents, from which the lines may somewhat vary, but to which they always tend to recur. We can never be in doubt, for instance, as to whether an English poem is written in iambic or anapæstic rhythm, that is to say, whether the accent normally falls on every second or on every third syllable. A definite metrical structure, however, is not absolutely necessary to poetry. Its absence has been supplied, for example, by antithesis among the Hebrews, by alliteration among the early English. And the *trouvères* of northern France, from whom, rather than from the more Latinised *troubadours* of the south, French poetry mainly descends, seem to have gradually acquiesced in a still simpler scheme of poetical requirements. Many

of them thought it enough to divide their words into rhyming lines containing an equal number of syllables, though not necessarily an equal number of accents. Perhaps this course was suggested to them by an unusual difficulty which French accentuation presents to the poet. The tendency, common to all the Romance languages, to drop the syllables which succeed the accented syllable has been carried to its extreme in France. For in the French tongue the accent always falls on the last syllable of a word except when that syllable has a mute *e* for its only vowel, when the accent falls on the syllable before it.

This uniformity of accentuation makes any regular metre more difficult to manage, as (neglecting the mute *e*) a word must end wherever an accent is wanted. It is perhaps mainly from this cause that it has come to pass that in a line of French poetry (unless specially written for music) the thing which in English poetry is fixed—namely, the number of accents—is variable, and the thing which in English is variable—namely, the number of syllables—is fixed. There is no normal arrangement of feet to which a French alexandrine tends to recur. All that is necessary is that there should be an accent (and consequently the end of a word) in the sixth place, and again in the twelfth place, at the end of the line. It is therefore a mistake to try to read French alexandrines as if they were to be referred to an iambic type. The number of accented syllables in a French alexandrine varies, and

their position varies also. Sometimes the line has no marked accents except in the sixth and twelfth places; sometimes it has a marked iambic character, sometimes an anapæstic character. Oftenest, perhaps, it is a loose arrangement of anapæsts interspersed with iambs. Take this couplet as an example—

“Sacha’nt qu’il po’rte en lui’ des vengea’nces trop sû’res,
Tout gonflé de poiso’n il atten’d les morsu’res.”

The first of these lines begins in an iambic rhythm, and ends in an anapæstic rhythm. The second line is anapæstic throughout.

It would take too much space to develop this theme. The important point to notice is the latitude which is thus given to the poet. The structure of the verse neither much confines nor much assists him; whatever metrical charm it is to have he must himself supply. And it is the great glory of M. Hugo that he has supplied this charm in such variety—has so far surpassed the elder poets in the number and complexity of his metrical effects both in lyric, epic, and dramatic verse.

There is indeed one point for which he is often praised, but in which his success is less complete than at first sight appears. He has taken great pains to avoid the *chevilles*, or otiose adjectives, etc., introduced by the tragedians at the ends of lines in order to secure a rhyme. But the exigencies of rhyme have forced him often to introduce half a line or a whole line which looks as if it had a meaning of its own, but

proves on examination to be no better than a pretentious *cheville*. Let us take as an example the well-known couplet—

“Ce siècle avait deux ans ; Rome remplaçait Sparte,
Déjà Napoléon perçait sous Bonaparte.”

Here the words “Rome remplaçait Sparte” have a *faux air* of epigram. But when we discover that all they mean is that the extremely slight resemblance of Paris to Sparta in 1793 was succeeded by its still slighter resemblance to Rome in 1802, and that the word “Sparte” has been dragged in at any cost for the rhyme’s sake, we feel that a *cheville*, like some other concessions to the intractable nature of things, is least offensive when it asks for no admiration.

On the other hand, M. Hugo’s use of *enjambement*—the interlacing of one line with the next—which the tragedians avoid, and his habitual use of the *mot propre*, or really descriptive word, instead of the insipid paraphrases once in fashion, are conspicuous instances of the skill with which he has extended the conventional limits of versification. And this extension was much needed in France. Few nations have had to contend with a language less poetically flexible, a syntax more infertile, a vocabulary more confined. And few nations have laid upon themselves laws of poetical dignity so rigorous and arbitrary—laws imposed not by rhythmical instinct, but by a tyrannical spirit of symmetry and pomp ; laws whose fulfilment

could bring little pleasure, while their infraction was punished with a bitterness of censure such as in most countries is kept for moral faults alone.

The changes adopted by M. Hugo, therefore, have been almost wholly advantageous. Where it was well to make the old rules more stringent, as in the case of rhymes, he has done so; where it was well to relax them, as in the case of the *enjambement*, he has relaxed them; where a wholly new life and variety were needed—namely, in the rhythmical structure of the three main classes of poetry—he has infused that life. He has revived what was good in early French poetry, and has added new artifices of his own. And he has outlived the opposition to his innovations, and is now himself an accepted model of French versification.

It must not be supposed that M. Hugo is the only modern French poet who has achieved results of this kind. The works of Lamartine and De Musset, for instance, contain examples of metrical charm which it would be hard to surpass. But M. Hugo covers more ground than they. His works form an unfailing repertory both of metrical and of rhetorical artifices; and it is not extravagant to say that he has shown a more complete command over the resources of the French language than any previous author.

If we are asked to what rank among French poets M. Hugo is entitled by his possession of this unique power over the vehicle of poetry, we find it hard to reply. The analogy of Mr. Swinburne at once occurs.

Most persons who take this kind of *virtuoso* interest in language and metre will probably consider that Mr. Swinburne has shown a power of handling the English tongue which no other poet has ever surpassed. And, on the other hand, in M. Hugo, as well as in the English poet, there is something of that unreality which, as it has been well said, often makes it necessary for the reader of Mr. Swinburne's most impassioned poems to contribute the sincerity of feeling himself. And if in M. Hugo there is sometimes a greater weight and force—if *Les Châtiments* is on the whole a stronger book than *Songs before Sunrise*, yet there is surely nothing in M. Hugo to equal Mr. Swinburne's highest flights—no elevation like that of the lines *Super Flumina Babylonis*, which show us once more with what a glory of inspiration a great poet can praise a great hero. The poetical superiority of the English language to the French tells both ways in this comparison. On the one hand, the lack of richness, majesty, and glamour in the French tongue will sometimes seem to leave M. Hugo's best poetical artifices naked, as it were, before our eyes—will make us think in half-disgust that this, after all, is what poetry as poetry comes to. On the other hand, the very jejuneness of the language fits it for the production of a peculiar class of effects—effects of crystalline clearness and triumphant simplicity, which give us perhaps a more magical sense of art which has concealed its art than any English versification can offer.

But I must content myself with indicating this parallel, without attempting to adjudge a poetic rank which must depend so largely upon what it is with which the reader desires that poetry should supply him.

That potency of imagination in M. Hugo to which I have already referred—his power of projecting himself, as it were, into some strange and strong situation with all his ordinary intellectual resources still about him—is of course visible not only in his poems, but in his plays and romances. These, however, are so familiar to English readers, and have received such ample appreciation, that I do not propose to discuss them at length, especially since they seem to me to constitute rather the outworks than the central citadel of their author's fame. For the imaginative realisation which is so admirable in certain crowning moments of these stories has hardly been extended to their general conduct or their inner consistency. And an historical novel can hardly be quite satisfactory unless it be, like Scott's, the outcome of a life which has identified itself from childhood with the scene, and almost with the age, described. At the least it ought, like *Romola*, to be the flower which blossoms from a study as accurate and profound as would be needed for an independent history. In the picture in *Les Misérables* of Paris early in this century, M. Hugo's art fulfils these conditions. But when he describes scenes or places more remote, he rapidly loses verisimilitude, till *L'Homme qui rit*, the scene of which professes to be laid in Queen Anne's

England, would have won more credence if it had been given out as an episode occurring in the island of Barataria.

The interest, therefore, of these romances is in great measure independent of their historical framework. It is the interest which we feel in seeing life treated by a man who can deal with emotion in large masses and move freely among great ideas. The literary artifices employed may be sometimes unworthy of high art. We may be often reminded of the crude touches by which Dickens, or certain authors much inferior to Dickens, produce their powerful general effects. But at any rate the effect is produced, and Esmeralda, Bishop Myriel, Fantine, Valjean, Gilliatt, Gavroche, have entered definitively into that gallery of strongly-realised characters whose substantive existence seems almost to be demonstrated by the "permanent possibilities of sensation" which their names evoke in our hearts.

M. Hugo's dramas, again, exhibit his strong and his weak points in a concentrated form. His mastery over rhythm and rhyme, his wealth of declamation and epigram, are seen at their best in *Hernani* and *Le Roi s'amuse*; and his instinct for all that is stirring, grandiose, and emphatic in human affairs, aids him in the presentation of scenic effects and the conduct of rapid action. The more must we regret to find that these striking dramas contain, one may almost say, no truth whatever; neither truth to history nor truth to nature. It is not worth while to analyse the plot of

each play. A glance at *Cromwell* or *Marie Tudor* will be enough to show an English reader that M. Hugo can hardly have made any serious attempt to maintain historical probability. But the unreality of the personages in themselves is still more disappointing, as being in such direct opposition to the precepts of M. Hugo's own school. Racine and Corneille create, for the most part, characters which are typical rather than individual. A few leading qualities are given, and the action of circumstances is made to illustrate these qualities in a simple and massive manner, with no attempt to place before us, as Shakespeare does, a living personage conceived from within, and presenting a personality in itself indefinable, but capable of holding together a complex web of mental and moral characteristics. But the Romanticists professed to imitate Shakespeare rather than Racine in this respect; and the modern school of French drama has produced many realistic and many delicate sketches. M. Hugo claims more loudly than any one that it is thus that he understands drama; but the very words in which he describes his way of going to work are enough to explain its comparative failure.

“ Eh bien ! qu'est-ce que c'est que Lucrezia Borgia ? Prenez la difformité morale la plus hideuse, la plus repoussante, la plus complète ; . . . et maintenant mêlez à toute cette difformité morale un sentiment pur, le plus pur que la femme puisse éprouver, le sentiment maternel ; dans votre monstre mettez une mère ; et le monstre intéressera ,

et le monstre fera pleurer, et cette créature qui faisait peur fera pitié, et cette âme difforme deviendra presque belle à vos yeux. Ainsi, la paternité sanctifiant la difformité physique, voilà *Le Roi s'amuse* ; la maternité purifiant la difformité morale, voilà *Lucrèce Borgia*."

This system of predetermined paradox, of embodied antithesis, is surely not likely to produce figures which will seem to live before us. Imagination is thrown away when it devotes itself to imagining what is so grotesquely impossible. How differently does a real knowledge of the human heart clothe itself in fiction ! Take, for instance, the way in which the fraternal affection between Tom and Maggie Tulliver is treated in *The Mill on the Floss* ; its half-animal growth, its dumb persistence, its misunderstandings and repulsions, and then its momentary self-revelation in the ecstasy of death. These primary emotions are not simply spells to conjure by, magical ingredients which we can throw into the cauldron of human passions and change it in a moment from blood-red to sky-blue. They are the simple impulses of complex action ; they are life-long forces which modify the character as a partial access to light modifies the growth of a tree.

No doubt it is difficult to imply all this within the narrow limits and amid the thronging incidents of a play ; difficult to paint an emotional history which shall be catastrophic without being discontinuous. M. Hugo's catastrophes are too apt to snap the thread of his story. Triboulet as a spiteful court fool is despi-

cable ; Triboulet as an injured father is almost sublime ; but there is little more connection between his speeches in the two characters than is involved in the appearance of the same name at their head. The want of any real conception of the interaction of human beings upon each other is felt throughout. The most potent genius cannot create other personalities wholly out of its own : the greatest like the least of us, if he would understand his fellows, needs laborious observation, patient analysis, and, above all, that power of sympathy which steals like daylight into the heart's hidden chambers in whose lock no key will turn.

It is the want of knowledge, the want of truth, which has left M. Hugo no "reincarnation of Shakespeare," but only the most magnificent of melodramatists.

The want of truth ! It is hardly credible how this moral defect, this reckless indifference to accuracy of assertion, has infected M. Hugo's works. We could forgive an absence both of the historical and the scientific instinct, if our author at least took care to be correct in details. We could forgive carelessness in details if a true instinct for history or for science determined the general effect. But too often all is wrong together, and, worse still, this quagmire of falsity is surrounded with placards emphatically announcing that every inch of the ground is firm.

I have neither the knowledge nor the space to go through the hundredth part of M. Hugo's blunders.

Nihil tetigit quod non confuderit. Engineers and physicists will explain the absurdity of the engineering and the physics which make up so large a part of *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. Men familiar with the languages of Brittany and of Guernsey have shown how M. Hugo has transferred dozens of words from a Guernsey dictionary to put into the mouths of Breton peasants. Men who know the slang and the ruffians of Paris will bear witness to the gratuitous arrogance of his pretensions to this unsavoury lore, in which he is, as compared with Gaboriau or Zola, as a child to a professor. We can all judge of his etymology of the name of that famous Scotch "headland," "The First of the Fourth." We can all estimate the verisimilitude of the tale of the fortunes of that great peer, Lord Linnaeus Clancharlie, a voluntary exile from his truly British country-seats of Hell-kerters, Homble, and Gumdraith. Yet, if we are to take M. Hugo's word for it, he knows more about every country in Europe than the natives themselves. "Il est bien entendu," he says in a note to *Ruy Blas*, on which M. Planche's sarcasm has fixed, "*il est bien entendu que dans Ruy Blas, comme dans tous les ouvrages précédents de l'auteur, tous les détails d'érudition sont scrupuleusement exacts.*" Methinks M. Hugo doth protest too much. For in support of his assertion that he is intimately acquainted with the language, literature, and secret history of Spain, he deigns only to furnish us with an explanation of the word *Almojarifazgo*. Almojarifazgo!

One is tempted to embark upon a "key to all mythologies" on the strength of a sound acquaintance with the etymology of Abracadabra.

There is one subject—his own Notre-Dame—on which we might have trusted that M. Hugo would have been safe from attack. But when we come on a description of this sanctuary as consisting of "deux tours de granit faites par Charlemagne" our confidence vanishes with great suddenness. For it is certain that there is not an ounce of granite in the towers of Notre-Dame, and that Charlemagne had just as much to do with building them as Caligula.

It is of course on the moral side that these inaccuracies are most important. There is no question as to M. Hugo's powers of acquisition, comprehension, memory. He might easily have become a real *savant*, a real historian, if he had given to other subjects the same kind of attention which he has given to versification and grammar, if he had cared as much for what he said as for the style in which he said it. But here once more his self-adoration has interfered. It has taught him that he is *supra scientiam*, that neither Nature nor History can possibly have any secrets hidden from him, that a royal road has taken him to the very source and fount of things. And when he asserts that some preposterous misdescription of nature, some staring historical blunder, is absolutely correct, we must not think that he is wilfully trying to deceive us. We must remember how easy a man finds it to

forget that external facts have any existence independent of his own mind; how soon the philosopher's *ipse dixit* becomes convincing to the philosopher himself.

From the literary let us turn to the political side of M. Hugo's career. And here especially we shall find him "French of the French," summing up in one life the conflicting tendencies of his time.

The Frenchmen whose youth fell early in this century were born into a moral chaos. They awoke, as it were, in a desecrated temple, with a shattered Dagon stretched across its floor. It was plain that Napoleon had ruined France, and yet there was no idol to set up in his stead. The Bourbons, brought back by strangers, seemed to symbolise only the humiliation of France—the loss even of that military glory which she had accepted as a substitute for the freedom and virtue which the Revolution had proclaimed so often, but had never enthroned. Aspiring youths were hard put to it to create an ideal. It was almost a chance whether they became Ultramontane and Royalist, or dreamt of a far-off republic, too often discounted at the barricades. But the mass of men throughout the first half of the century were slowly falling back into the Napoleonic illusion; they had not virtue enough to save them from admiring what was without virtue, and thus from ultimately expiating their worship of ignoble glory by fellowship in ignoble ruin. Victor Hugo's political attitude was determined mainly by personal sympathies. He was brought up by a Royalist mother

and spent his early youth with the young Romanticists, who were, for the most part, Royalist and Catholic. The *Odes et Ballades* and some later poems express this phase of his life.

The death of his brother Eugène recalled his father from a kind of voluntary exile. The Comte Hugo had been a Bonapartist general, always in semi-disgrace for his republican opinions—the Baron de Pontmercy of *Les Misérables*, where Marius represents the author himself. From his father the young poet learnt Republicanism, and added of his own motion a worship of the great conqueror whose character in some points resembled his own—"Napoléon, soleil dont je suis le Memnon."

We need not condemn this change of front. Young men will often veer round rather abruptly on their first contact with actual life. For each set of views has a poetry of its own, which may attract the imagination of youth, but which is apt to appear unreal when confronted with this mixed world. And a reaction from ideals which we can no longer idealise is responsible for no small share of our working principles.

It is more important to notice how superficial has been M. Hugo's grasp, whether of the monarchical or of the republican conception of society. Charles the Tenth may not have been an inspiring person. But the relation between France and her kings, one of the most imposing themes in history, might have suggested something better than the *banalités* of the "Funeral

Ode" in the *Voix Intérieures*. And if the shallowness here be ascribed to immaturity, it must be replied that we find the same vague and empty rhetoric in M. Hugo's praises of the Republic. And yet there is no subject on which a political preacher in France needs to be more explicit. For under the name of Republic are included two forms of government as dissimilar as forms of government can be. A republic may be constructed, like the American Republic, on individualistic principles, reducing the action of government to a minimum, and leaving every one undisturbed in the pursuit of private well-being. Or it may be constructed on socialistic principles, such as those which Fourier or Saint-Simon laid down, involving a profound reconstruction of society and a levelling of ranks and fortunes. A republic of the first type may yet be permanently established in France. But its danger lies in its failure to satisfy the enthusiasts of any party. For it is the second type of Republic towards which the eager spirits of the great French towns seem in reality to tend. But this socialistic democracy has never yet been able to manifest itself in a practicable form, or to avoid even such obvious roads to ruin as political economy can point out. Surely the preacher of the Republic in France should say which of these types or what modification of them he desires—should explain how far the United States answer to his ideal, or to what extent and with what safeguards he thinks his country prepared to accept a communistic scheme.

No real instruction on these points can be got from M. Hugo's writings or speeches. Poets are not bound to be politicians. But when a poet claims also to be a statesman and a prophet, he ought to give a reason for the faith that is in him; he ought to show some sign of having loosened the political knots by reflection before he cuts them by epigram and imagery. If he merely boxes the rhetorical compass — if he merely gives us a series of declamations on the glories of the Bourbons, of Napoleon, of the Republic which is to be — we cannot attach much value to his professed inspiration.

It may be said that there is at least one social reform on which M. Hugo has dwelt consistently through all his phases—the abolition of the punishment of death. Like those branches of mathematics which involve infinite quantities, any question concerned with human life and death is a favourite lurking-place of fallacies. We will speak here only of M. Hugo's ground of objection, which lies in the *cruelty* of the punishment. So far as the cruelty consists in the pain of anticipation, that pain is divisible into two factors—regret at leaving a family unprovided for, and actual terror. The first factor, if felt at all, is felt equally by the convict who is going to the galleys for life. And the second factor we may surely neglect. If a man has left his neighbour's family mourning, we need not be tender over a few days of selfish terror for himself. Then comes, according to M. Hugo, the

crowning cruelty of removing him from this world. We may reply that if we remove him from his home to a prison for life we are pretty sure that we are doing him an injury. But if, instead of this, we remove him from the earth altogether, we have no means of knowing whether we are doing him an injury or not. Surely there are plenty of other benevolent causes to be taken up which, if less susceptible of pathetic advocacy, are also less dependent on a turn of metaphysics.

But in fact, during the years preceding the *coup d'état*, M. Hugo was increasingly in want of something to say. His style continued to improve; his mastery over rhythm and rhyme grew more magical than ever. But each succeeding volume of verse—*Les Voix Intérieures*, *Les Rayons et les Ombres*—was weaker than the last. It was supposed that he had written himself out. The Revolution of 1848 did not bring him to the front. But in July 1851 he delivered in the Assembly an impassioned speech against Louis-Napoleon, who, till his treasonable designs on the Republic became manifest, had been the poet's intimate friend. After the *coup d'état* and a few days of futile counterplotting, which all the literary artifices of the *Histoire d'un Crime* can hardly make impressive, M. Hugo made his escape from France. From Jersey and Guernsey he despatched that marvellous series of songs and satires which were passed secretly from hand to hand in Paris, and read with tears and cries of rage during that national paralysis which ended in the

Second Empire. *Les Châtiments* is perhaps M. Hugo's best work. Sarcasm, declamation, song, all his powers culminate and are concentrated there. Can anything be more melodious, simpler, more touching, than these last words of a dying exile?—

“ Un proscrit, lassé de souffrir,
Mourait ; calme, il fermait son livre ;
Et je lui dis : ‘ Pourquoi mourir ? ’
Il me répondit : ‘ Pourquoi vivre ? ’
Puis il reprit : ‘ Je me délivre.
Adieu ! je meurs. Néron-Scapin
Met aux fers la France flétrie.’ . . .

—On ne peut pas vivre sans pain ;

On ne peut pas non plus vivre sans la patrie.—

“ . . . ‘ Je meurs de ne plus voir les champs
Où je regardais l’aube naître,
De ne plus entendre les chants
Que j’entendais de ma fenêtre.
Mon âme est où je ne puis être.
Sous quatre planches de sapin,
Enterrez-moi dans la prairie.’

—On ne peut pas vivre sans pain ;

On ne peut pas non plus vivre sans la patrie.—”

Has sarcasm ever barbed itself with bitterer emphasis than in the following song?—

“ Sa grandeur éblouit l’histoire.
Quinze ans, il fut
Le dieu qui trainait la victoire
Sur un affût ;

L'Europe sous sa loi guerrière
Se débattit.—

Toi, son singe, marche derrière,
Petit, petit.

“ Napoléon dans la bataille,
Grave et serein,
Guidait à travers la mitraille
L'aigle d'airain.
Il entra sur le pont d'Arcole,
Il en sortit.—
Voici de l'or, viens, pille et vole,
Petit, petit.

“ Berlin, Vienne, étaient ses maîtresses ;
Il les forçait,
Leste, et prenant les forteresses
Par le corset ;
Il triompha de cent bastilles
Qu'il investit.—
Voici pour toi, voici des filles,
Petit, petit.

“ Il passait les monts et les plaines,
Tenant en main
La palme, la foudre et les rênes
Du genre humain ;
Il était ivre de sa gloire
Qui retentit.—
Voici du sang, accours, viens boire,
Petit, petit.

“ Quand il tomba, lâchant le monde,
L'immense mer

Ouvrit à sa chute profonde
Le gouffre amer :
Il y plougea, sinistre archange,
Et s'engloutit.—
Toi, tu te noiras dans la fange,
Petit, petit."

Finally I must quote the song which seems to me the best of all, expressing as it does with a sound so ringing, with so passionate an intensity, that strange antithesis in the "twy-natured" French—their capacity at once for base materialism and for ecstatic ideality—the way in which the whole nation will seem suddenly to cast its slough as a serpent does, and to leap to life at a word.

" Il est des jours abjects où, séduits par la joie
Sans honneur,
Les peuples au succès se livrent, triste proie
Du bonheur.

" Alors des nations que berce un fatal songe
Dans leur lit,
La vertu coule et tombe ainsi que d'une éponge
L'eau jaillit.

" Alors devant le mal, le vice, la folie,
Les vivants
Imitent les saluts du vil roseau qui plie
Sous les vents.

" Alors festius et jeux ; rien de ce que dit l'âme
Ne s'entend ;
On boit, on mange, on chante, on danse, on est infâme
Et content.

“ Le crime heureux, servi par d'immondes ministres,
Sous les cieux
Rit, et vous frissonnez, grands ossements sinistres
Des aïeux.

“ On vit honteux, les yeux troublés, le pas oblique,
Hébéte ;
Tout-à-coup un clairon jette aux vents : République !
Liberté !

“ Et le monde, éveillé par cette âpre fanfare,
Est pareil
Aux ivrognes de nuit qu'en se levant effare
Le soleil.”

A volume could not paint more vividly than these magnificent lines that characteristic shock and awakening—that divine and unreasonable fire—which seems to run through Paris in time of revolution like Rumour through the Hellenic host in the crisis of victory. But where the song ends the story has too often ended. How often has some noble protest, some just and armed appeal, sounded along the streets and Boulevards like the angel's trump, and has been followed by no Great Assize, no new and heavenly order, but by uncertain voices, angry eyes, confusion worse confounded, and the old round of fraud and tyranny begun anew !

It is guidance, not awakening, which France needs ; wisdom, not impulse ; a sincere self-condemnation for the sins of the past before she builds her castles in the future air.

Few persons will now be concerned to defend Napoleon the Third, that most inglorious representative of glory. Thus far it is easy to sympathise with *Les Châtiments* and *Napoléon le Petit*. But we in England cannot consent to throw, as M. Hugo too often throws, the blame of the establishment of this base empire wholly on those who profited thereby. We must hold that every town, every village, every adult in France were sharers to some degree in the shame of such an overthrow at the hands of such men. Least of all can those be absolved who made the ignoble crimes of the Second Empire possible by their adoration of the splendid crimes of the First. When "the Memnon of Napoleon" complained that

"Ce voleur de nuit alluma sa lanterne
Au soleil d'Austerlitz,"

he should have asked himself whether he had done well in helping to keep the sun of Austerlitz alight.

This and much other fault might be found with the temper of M. Hugo's exile. We miss the high self-forgetfulness, the resolute justice, of Mazzini banished and defamed. But the great fact remains. M. Hugo, in scorn of amnesties and invitations, lived out nineteen years of exile; his voice did not fail nor his heart falter; he stood on his rock in the free British seas like Elijah on Carmel, spokesman and champion of all those who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It is this exile that has given dignity to his

life ; it is banishment from France that has made him one of her heroes. *Perierat, nisi perisset.*

And when at last that evil empire set in blood the exile's triumph came. From Brussels, on the eve of re-entering Paris, he wrote some of his most splendid verses—verses in which all that there is of ardent in his spirit, of majestic in his personality, seems to lift and carry us along with him as in a chariot of fire.

“ Alors qu'on entendait ta fanfare de fête
Retentir,
O Paris, je t'ai fui comme le noir prophète
Fuyait Tyr.

“ Quand l'empire en Gomorrhe avait changé Lutèce,
Morne, amer,
Je me suis envolé dans la grande tristesse
De la mer.

“ Là, tragique ; écoutant ta chanson, ton délire,
Bruits confus,
J'opposais à ton luxe, à ton rêve, à ton rire,
Un refus.

“ Mais aujourd'hui qu'arrive avec sa sombre foule
Attila,
Aujourd'hui que le monde autour de toi s'écroule,
Me voilà.

“ France, être sur ta claie à l'heure où l'on te traîne
Aux cheveux,
O ma mère, et porter mon anneau de ta chaîne,
Je le veux !

“ J'accours, puisque sur toi la bombe et la mitraille
Ont craché.

Tu me regarderas debout sur ta muraille,
Ou couché.

“ Et peut-être, en ta terre où brille l'espérance,
Pur flambeau,
Pour prix de mon exil, tu m'accorderas, France,
Un tombeau.”

M. Hugo's career since his return to Paris need be but briefly recounted. He remained in Paris during the siege, and his poems served as a rallying-point of patriotism, hatred of the Prussians, and hope of revenge. *L'Année Terrible*, it is true, gives a most crude and violent expression to the heated feelings of the time. Its contrast with M. Renan's writings of the same date shows all the difference between the patriot who is before all things a philosopher and the patriot who is before all things a rhetorician. Where the one seeks to prove how contrary to the true interests and instincts of Germany as a whole is the Prussian spirit of military conquest, the other out-herods Herod in his comparisons of the German Emperor to every pickpocket and cut-throat in history. Of course M. Hugo's method of treatment was the more popular of the two. At the close of the siege the Parisians elected him second only to M. Louis Blanc on the long list of members for the Department of the Seine, February 8, 1871. He resigned his seat at Bordeaux on the 8th of March because the Assembly would not

listen to a speech from him in honour of Garibaldi. The sudden death of his son on the 13th of March sent him on family business to Brussels, where he remained during the Commune. While he was in Brussels the Belgian Government announced that it would not receive escaped Communists as political exiles. M. Hugo wrote to a newspaper to say that *he* would receive them in his house at Brussels. On this his windows were broken by a mob of young Belgians "flown with insolence and wine," who raised the singular cry of "À bas Lord Clancharlie!" but were unable to beat in the door, which the nursery-maid had wisely bolted. Expelled from Belgium, M. Hugo returned to Paris. He was made a Senator, and has spoken repeatedly in the Senate and elsewhere.

Most of the measures which M. Hugo has during these years recommended—the rejection of the treaty of peace, the retention in the Assembly of the members for the ceded provinces, the recognition of the "right to labour," with its accompanying "State workshops," and the issue of bank-notes bearing interest, *billets de banque à revenu*—have been such as to inspire in English politicians little confidence in his judgment. But, in truth, his work during this critical period has lain less in the advocacy of any particular measures than in the delivery of stirring and highly-wrought discourses on the text that Paris is supreme; Paris is holy; Paris is the capital of the world, and includes within herself the progress and the hopes of man.

Outside France we need hardly discuss the truth of these propositions; a more practical question is whether in France's deep depression it might possibly have been wise to proclaim them—whether, in Plato's words, it can ever be well for a public man to play the part of the confectioner rather than of the physician. On this delicate point a French and an English critic will be apt to differ; but both must admire the extraordinary vigour of style and thought, the contagious enthusiasm and ardour of spirit, which enable this "old man eloquent" to lead at will "that fierce democracy" in any direction except into the secrets of their own bosoms and the sins of their own past.

"French of the French!" Our sober English maxims fail us when we would take counsel for a nation which can unite so much that we think despicable with so much that all must think great, which can keep her hope high through ruin, through chaos, and through shame, and which, when she least is leading the nations, will never quit her claim to the primacy of the world. Let us say with M. Renan that when a nation brings forth a Universal Idea it is at the cost of much shattering of her own frame, much exhaustion of her separate life; that it was by centuries of national humiliation that Greece expiated her creation of science and of art, and Italy her foundation of the Empire and the Papacy, and Germany her assertion of the freedom of the thought of man; and that the French Revolution, though a lesser thing

than these, was great ; and therefore that till the echo of the thunderpeals which announced that birth has died away, we shall see the strongest sons of France still staggering blindly beneath "the too vast orb of her fate."

III.

Turning from M. Hugo's political career to such of his personal emotions as he has chosen to reveal to us in his poems, we shall find the same rich and puissant nature shut in by the same moral barriers which we have already defined. He who cannot willingly take any but a central place may have friendships and loves in plenty, but there will be a point where all these will cease. The self-worshipper may not enter the shrine of another soul. He can never know an intimate and absolute comradeship, a second conscience in the heart of a friend. Still less can he experience that rarest joy of a man and a woman's love, when the man feels with a proud triumph her stainless spirit outsoar his own, and bear him with her to a paradise which she both creates and reveals. These things, to such as have known them, are the very substance and delight of life. Yet much remains. All that is benevolent, protective, paternal—compassion for the poor and the suffering, loving joy in childhood and infancy, loving remembrance of the dead—all this a man may feel without compromising the dignity of the idol

seated in his breast. And all this—pressed down, as it were, and running over—is to be found in M. Hugo's works. It is with him as we often see it with very vain but kindly people, who pour themselves with a prodigality of warm-heartedness into those affections where no equality can be claimed or desired. Valjean the convict, Gilliatt the fisherman, Gavroche the *gamin de Paris*, divide the honours of his romances. And the poems to his baby grandchildren are the true crown and glory of his age.

His amatory poems have not carried the world with them. More tact, perhaps, than he has deigned to use is necessary if we would touch on our own successes. He has naturally wished to descant on the being (or beings) who watch with mute devotion the thinker's brow, or kindle into rapture at the occasional largess of his smile. But he has forgotten that the heart of the male reader, unless it be skilfully surprised, is apt to be hardened by an obscure instinct which tells him that there is something almost shocking in the notion of a woman's adoring any man but himself. The truth is that the pleasures of love, like all pleasures, require a certain element of self-suppression before they can be made typical in art; the want which separates patronage and desire from chivalry and passion is more easily felt than described; nor can we make the lover's fortunes our own till his love has dethroned him from his own heart.

And yet perhaps this is to moralise overmuch. Some

love-poems there must be in which these serious considerations find no place — some careless bird-songs of an emotion which existed before morality had its birth.

“ Si tu veux, faisons un rêve,
Montons sur deux palefrois ;
Tu m’emmènes, je t’enlève.
L’oiseau chante dans les bois.

“ Je suis ton maître et ta proie ;
Partons, c’est la fin du jour ;
Mon cheval sera la joie.
Ton cheval sera l’amour.

“ Nous ferons toucher leurs têtes ;
Les voyages sont aisés ;
Nous donnerons à ces bêtes
Une avoine de baisers.

“ Allons-nous-en par la terre,
Sur nos deux chevaux charmants,
Dans l’azur, dans le mystère,
Dans les éblouissements !

“ Tu seras dame et moi comte ;
Viens, mon cœur s’épanouit,
Viens, nous conterons ce conte
Aux étoiles de la nuit.”

These exquisite stanzas from *Eviradnus* may fairly be compared with Mr. Swinburne’s *If you were April’s lady, and I were lord in May*, in the sense which they give of all the dash of playful adventure, the amorous eagerness of a flying and irresponsible joy.

The love of Marius for Cosette in *Les Misérables*

attempts a higher flight, and reflects the poet's most fervent days. And here there is much that is passionate and sweet. But there is, too, a strong element of selfishness in the lovers' conduct towards every one but each other. And the attempted delineation of delicate innocence suggests the effort of an imperfect memory. "Le pur et séraphique Marins," we are told, "eût été plutôt capable de monter chez une fille publique que de soulever la robe de Cosette à la hauteur de la cheville." A sentence like this somehow fails to convey the impression of seraphic purity. We need not dwell on this topic. But I must allude to one scene in *L'Homme qui rit* which Mr. Swinburne has highly praised. This is the scene where Josiane offers herself to the distorted and outcast Gwynplaine. Surely to admire this scene is to confound monstrosity with power. It is no new idea that a woman may have vile impulses and yet dally on the verge of vice; it is not hard to draw a staring picture of this unlovely self-restraint. Nor is Josiane's morbid desire for utter debasement in any degree novel; the sixth satire of Juvenal would furnish forth a hundred Josianes. But in the sixth satire of Juvenal the words which describe vicious instincts are written, as it were, with a brand on the offender's flesh. In *L'Homme qui rit* the indecency is decked out with rhetoric, and presented to us as a psychological revelation. Surely MM. Gautier, Feydeau, and Zola might be left to supply us with such revelations as this.

Connected perhaps with this defect is another form of want of sensibility even more repugnant to a healthy mind. We mean the taste which delights in dwelling not only on physical ugliness, but on physical horrors, which, without any wish to be cruel, pleases itself in realising the details of torture, filth, and corruption. M. Hugo's readers are not always safe from outrage of this kind. He has written, for instance, a poem called *Le Crapaud*, which I regret having read, and must decline to transcribe. Suffice it to say that it describes minutely certain acts of hideous cruelty perpetrated on a toad by the young Victor and his schoolboy friends—described as “blonds, charmants,” “l'aube dans les yeux,” “le printemps sur la joue,” and so forth. Before comparing a French boy's behaviour with that of an Etonian or a Wykehamist, we ought to make allowance for the system of French education, which is said to foster a certain unmanliness for which the boy himself is hardly to blame. But such excuses can avail little here. The sport of these children “with the morning in their eyes” consisted in a kind of loathsomeness of cruelty for which an English National School boy would have been kicked. And half a century afterwards the great poet puts this shameful story into a poem in order to point a copy-book moral to the effect that beasts are sometimes kinder than men! We need not be sentimental with regard either to pain or to death. Many reasons may make it desirable to inflict or to suffer either. But when we find a man

who can derive a literary pleasure from enlarging effectively upon the details of torture, then, however philanthropic his general aims may be, we cannot pardon him ; we must assert that his mind is tainted with a disease more hateful than obscenity itself.

Let us turn rapidly from these horrors to the poems which treat of the loveliness and mystery of childhood. Here M. Hugo is always at his best. Never does the exile's regret appear so noble as when he laments above all things that he is exiled from his daughter's tomb ; never is the gray head so venerable as when it bends over the cradle or the memory of a child.

“ O Jeanne ! Georges ! voix dont j'ai le cœur saisi !
Si les astres chantaient ils bégaieraient ainsi.
Leur front tourné vers nous nous éclaire et nous dore.
Oh ! d'où venez-vous donc, inconnus qu'on adore ?
Jeanne a l'air étonné ; George a les yeux hardis.
Ils trébuchent, encore ivres du paradis.”

I would gladly linger on these charming poems. But they have been praised already more eloquently than I could praise them. I will not attempt to vie with the force and abundance of Mr. Swinburne's style. But while I would refer the reader to these glowing and generous criticisms I must in fairness add some words of caution. The limits within which M. Hugo can preserve truth and pathos are somewhat narrow. While he talks only about children he can bring tears into our eyes. But the least allusion to himself or to

God is immediately disastrous. In the elegiac poems, for instance, the picture of the vanished child is grace itself:—

“ Elle était pâle et pourtant rose,
 Petite avec de grands cheveux ;
 Elle disait souvent : Je n’ose,
 Et ne disait jamais : Je veux.”

But when the mourner attempts a higher strain the old unreality recurs. It would need all the simplicity of the saints to keep us in sympathy with an address to God couched in terms like these:—

“ Je sais que vous avez bien autre chose à faire
 Que de nous plaindre tous,
 Et qu’un enfant qui meurt, désespoir de sa mère,
 Ne vous fait rien, à vous !”

Nor can we think it dignified for a man thus to urge his own merits on the Almighty:—

“ Considérez encor que j’avais, dès l’aurore,
 Travaillé, combattu, pensé, marché, lutté,
 Expliquant la nature à l’homme qui l’ignore,
 Éclairant toute chose avec votre clarté ;

“ Que j’avais, affrontant la haine et la colère,
 Fait ma tâche ici-bas,
 Que je ne pouvais pas m’attendre à ce salaire,” etc. etc.

There is something which provokes a smile in the notion of M. Hugo’s demanding special consideration from the Author of Nature on account of the very original explanations which he has given from time to

time of natural phenomena. But had his achievements in this line been all that he imagines them, can we sympathise with a man whose mind in this hour of deepest bereavement reverts irresistibly to his own merits ; whose first feeling is that he is not as other men are, and ought not to suffer as they ? Is not this a strange contradiction to the noble idea which lies at the root of Christianity — that he alone can become representative of humanity who has borne to the uttermost the sorrows of men ?

The same defect of the higher instincts appears strikingly in the poem in memory of Charles Vacquerie, the husband of M. Hugo's daughter, who committed suicide after vainly attempting to rescue his drowning wife.

This young man left behind him a mother "pâle et perdant la raison," and, we may suppose, the ordinary duties and responsibilities of life. M. Hugo, however, considers no explanation necessary ; he treats the deliberate suicide of sane persons under the pain of bereavement as an act which deserves unqualified praise, and has adopted it as the crowning glory of more than one of his imaginary heroes.

"Oh ! s'immoler, sortir avec l'ange qui sort,
Suivre ce qu'on aime dans l'horreur de la mort,
Dans le sépulchre ou sur les claies,
Donner ses jours, son sang et ses illusions !
Jésus baise en pleurant ces saintes actions
Avec les lèvres de ses plaies."

An easy heroism! To yield to the first impulse of anguish, to enter with Eurydice among the shades, to follow from a world grown desolate some beloved and incomparable soul! Jesus, and that code of courageous virtue which the name of Jesus represents, teach us a different lesson. They teach us that the way to reunion with the best and dearest lies not through defection and despair, but through work and hope, and that those alone can expect the reward of great hearts who have borne with constancy all that great hearts can bear. *"'Tis better that our griefs should not spread far."*

IV.

Before we close our survey of this puissant and many-gifted nature it is natural to ask ourselves whether we can discern any guiding conception which has regulated the exercise of all these powers—any individual and consistent view of the sum of things which reveals itself from time to time amid these labyrinths of song. Certain principles we can plainly discern, a belief in France, a belief in democracy, a true sympathy with the weak, the outcast, the oppressed. To some of us the exaggeration of his patriotism may seem to fit it rather for boys than men. To some of us an admiration for republics as such may seem rather fanciful than sublime, unless it be, as in Mazzini, simply the form in which a profound craving for public

virtue finds, from historical causes, its readiest channel. But at any rate these are living watchwords: France, the Republic, Childhood, the Oppressed—these are worthy themes for a great poet to sing. And here we would stop, but that it is plain that these are not all that he has aimed at singing. He claims to speak to us not only as a Frenchman and a philanthropist, but as a preacher and a seer. Vision, revelation, mission, apostolate—words like these are ever on his lips. He would have us believe that he has gazed deeply into the Infinite, that he has heard the words which issue from the “Mouth of Shade.” As confidently as any “God-intoxicated” mystic, he invokes as his authority and inspiration the Eternal Name.

Is there any reality in all this? Is there any harmonising truth about the universe, any illuminating conception of the Divine, which this great poet has received, and has been sent to teach us? With real, with deep regret I answer that I believe that there is *not*. Reluctantly I say that long study of his works has revealed only a wild and whirling chaos—a cloud-land which reflects no figure grander than the poet’s own.

Friends of M. Hugo’s have indeed affirmed that he has given us the clue to his inner meaning—that he has in many ways indicated that the central point of his system, his true kernel of belief, is that religion within religions which we associate with the name of Pythagoras, which reappears under different semblances

in many ages and many lands, and which, it is hinted, some mysterious revelation has impressed with special force on this poet's mind. But I cannot say that these visions of his seem to me to bring us any light, or that his mystical and transmigrational poems (from *Ce que dit la bouche d'Ombre* to *Le Poème du Jardin des Plantes*) are written with a truer accent of conviction than a thousand other pages embodying a hundred other faiths. For all faiths are there. Theism, pantheism, atheism, every mood from a glowing optimism to a cynical despair—all these appear in turn and are used alike as the vehicle of the accustomed rhetoric, the old self-praise. Even when words are put into God's own mouth we cannot help feeling that no alias is more transparent than M. Hugo's God.

How deep an irreverence is here! We are shocked by the *Dieu des Bonnes Gens* of Béranger, the *Dieu devant qui l'on s'incline le verre en main*, the vulgar patron of ignoble pleasures. But at least a God like Béranger's is hardly meant to be taken seriously; he is the offspring of an imagination bound and rooted in this world and amid the shows of things. M. Hugo has profaned a higher light—has driven astray a chariot which might, in Plato's words, have followed with the company of gods across the vault of heaven. He has sought first his own glory, and the glory of the Invisible has been hid from his eyes. And thus it has come to pass that in this age of faith's formation and of faith's decay, which feels above all things its

need of the sincere expression of all shades of reasoned belief and unbelief, of heartfelt confidence or despair—in this age, when a harmony as yet unknown is shaping itself, as it were, audibly from the cry and shock of souls, this great singer's strain has no part in that attuning choir; his voice that fain had filled infinity dies out into the void.

I might double the length of this essay with passages illustrative of my meaning here. I will quote one alone, a passage in which the Almighty does not escape the fate which befalls every one whose name M. Hugo mentions—the fate of being employed as a foil and contrast to the greatness and goodness of M. Hugo.

To understand the lines in question a few words of introduction are required.

Most men who think at all, whatever their creed may be, have at one time or another faced the terrible possibility that after all there is no hope—that there are no “gods who prefer the just man to the unjust”—that our loves and aspirations do but mock us with an ever unattainable desire. And the poets who have been the voices of humanity have given utterance to this dark fear in many a passage which has sunk deeply into human hearts—from the stern realism of Achilles among the shades down to the visionary despair of the end of *Alastor*—from the bitterness of the Hebrew preacher down to the melodious complainings of “the idle singer of an empty day.” Often,

indeed, we measure the elevation of the poet or of the race to which he sings by noting the nature of the regret on which he chiefly dwells—whether it be, as often with the Greeks, mainly for the loss of our own joy in life and sunlight, or, as in the sadder Psalms, resentment at the outrage of Death against Justice, or the still nobler agony of the thought that the claim of Love to its own continuance shall be made in vain.

By what indeed are we to judge a man if not by the way in which he meets this problem? Be his speculative conclusions what they may, if there be any unselfishness in him, if any heroism, if any holiness, he will show them in the face of these extreme possibilities, this one hope worth hoping, this only formidable fear.

In one of the last poems of *L'Année Terrible* M. Hugo paints at great length and with startling rhetoric the possibility that God may at last be found to have deceived us all along—that “the moral cosmos may be reduced to a chaos,” and man, the sport of destiny, expire in a ruined universe. What, then, is the central point of this poem? what is the idea which stands out for our strength or solace from this profusion of rhetoric and metaphor? It is—I blush with shame for M. Hugo in writing it down—it is that M. Hugo himself may be relied upon to chase and catch the recalcitrant Deity, like a wolf in the forest, and to overawe Him by the majesty of his personal appearance and the eloquence of his rebuke:—

"J'irais, je le verrais, et je le saisisrais

Dans les cieux, comme on prend un loup dans les forêts,

Et terrible, indigné, calme, extraordinaire,

Je le dénoncerais à son propre tonnerre."

M. Hugo, forsooth, would be terrible! M. Hugo would be calm! M. Hugo would be extraordinary! It seems likely that at the crack of doom even M. Hugo might see something more terrible and extraordinary than himself.

Can the force of egoism farther go? Can we accept as a teacher or a prophet a man who sees on the whole vault of heaven only the Brocken-spectre of his own soul? Must not all our admiration for this man's talents enclose within itself an ineffaceable core of contempt?

Or rather let us say that this, like all contempt, must ultimately resolve itself into a profound compassion. Must we not pity the man, however great his genius or his fame, who has not found in this or the other world one love or one worship which could teach him to forget himself? Let him call his works mountains, himself a Titan, if he will: the Titans with their heaped-up mountains could never scale the sky.

But we will not accept his metaphor. We will not part from him except with a comparison which has in it at once less of arrogance and more of hope. For when we ponder on that keen but troubled vision, that soaring but self-captive spirit, we recur to Plato's charioteer, who has indeed in times foregone driven

upwards to feast and festival with the blessed gods—who has looked, indeed, for a moment on very Justice, very Beauty, very Truth, but in the midst of the thunder of rebellious horses and a storm and confusion of the soul,—till he crashes downwards to the earth, and feeds upon the semblances of things, and half forgets and half remembers what that true world has shown. For him, in Plato's myth, there yet is a glorious hope; there remains for him some needful draught of self-forgetfulness, some purifying passage beneath the earth; and then again he may look with the gods on Truth, and stand with firmer footsteps upon the heavenly way.

ERNEST RENAN.

I.

*Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἀλλὰ σὺ ῥῦσαι ὑπ' ἥερος νῆας Ἀχαιῶν,
Ποίησον δ' αἶθρην, δὸς δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδέσθαι,
'Εν δὲ φάει καὶ δλεσσον, ἐπεὶ νύ τοι εὔαδεν οὔτως.*

THE little town of St. Renan in Cornwall, and various springs and waters in other Celtic regions, preserve for us the memory of an anomalous and a formidable saint. Ronan or Renan, indeed, seems properly to have been one of those autochthonous divinities, connected with earth and the elements, who preceded almost everywhere the advent of more exalted gods. He was received, however, after some hesitation, into the Christian Pantheon, and became the eponymous saint of a Celtic clan. This clan of Renan migrated from Cardiganshire to Ledano on the Trieux in Brittany, about the year 480, and have ever since lived in honourable poverty, engaged in tilling the ground and fishing on the Breton coast; one of the families who there form an unexhausted repository of the pieties and loyalties of the past.

From this simple and virtuous stock, in this atmo-

sphere of old-world calm, Ernest Renan was born sixty years ago. In a charming series of autobiographical papers he has sketched his own early years ; his childhood surrounded by legends of the saints and of the sea ; his schooling received from the pious priests of Tréguier ; and then his sudden transference, in 1836, as the most promising boy of his district, to the Petit Séminaire Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet at Paris, where for three years he was one of M. Dupanloup's most eager pupils. Thence he was sent for four years to Issy, the country establishment of the Séminaire Saint-Sulpice, to receive his final preparation for the priesthood. For to that life he had always aspired, and had he been left beneath the shadow of his Breton cathedral he might have become a learned and not an unorthodox priest. But now his education had gone too far ; sojourn in Paris, even in a seminary, had awakened his critical and scientific interests, and he began to feel that such a career was impossible to him. He left it with hesitation and much self-questioning, but without bitterness and without subsequent regrets. Much pain naturally followed on this disruption of life-long affections and ties. There were material hardships, too, but his sister's devoted care solaced and supported him till he had made friends of his own and reached an independent position. His attainment, in 1847, of the Volney Prize for a treatise on the Semitic languages, afterwards developed into a general history, may be taken as the first step in a long career of

successful literary and scientific labour. To one episode in that career—his professorship of Hebrew at the Collège de France—we shall have to recur again; but with this exception we may confine our attention to his published works alone; always the most satisfactory course in the case of a yet living man whose writings, and not his actions, have made him a public character.

The subjects of these works are so various, and they indicate so far-reaching a study of the development of the human mind, that some brief sketch of their scope is essential if we would understand on how wide an induction the views of this great historical critic are based. It is in the garden of Eden that M. Renan makes his first appearance on the field of history, and his localisation of that cradle of the Semitic,—perhaps also of the Aryan race,—in the Beloortag, near the plateau of Pamir, at the junction of the Beloortag with the Himalayas, forms one of the most interesting discussions in his history of the Semitic languages.¹ It is at this point in the world's career that he is inclined to place the beginning of articulate speech; and his treatise on the origin of language² embodies a theory of great ingenuity, but which, however, our increasing knowledge of primitive man is daily rendering less plausible. From the great delicacy and complexity of some of the oldest idioms which have reached us, and from the fact that the history of

¹ *Histoire Générale des Langues Sémitiques.*

² *De l'Origine du Langage.*

language, almost everywhere that we can trace it, is a history of simplification and dissolution, M. Renan argues that language appeared at once in a highly-organised state, as the suddenly projected image of the mental operations of families of mankind far removed from barbarism. Comparative philology has entered on a different phase since this treatise appeared, and should it ever be re-written its author will have to take into account many further observations on the phenomena of savage speech, many new conceptions as to the development of the mind of primitive man. From these prehistoric questions we pass on to the great settled civilisations, Cushite, Chamite, or Turanian, of the early world. On China,¹ Nineveh,² Egypt,³ M. Renan has published admirable essays, but essays which show power of generalisation rather than any specialised acquirement. A brilliant paper on Berber Society,⁴ and some pages on the Soudan,⁵ come under the same category. At Babylon he enters the field as an independent investigator. His tractate "On the Book of Nabathæan agriculture" (which survives for us in an Arabic form), was for some time held to have disposed of the theory that a literary civilisation existed at Babylon 3000 years before our era.

Coming now to the Semitic stem we find the traces of M. Renan's labours on every member of this group

¹ *L'Instruction Publique en Chine.*

² *La Découverte de Ninive.*

³ *L'Ancienne Egypte.*

⁴ *La Société Berbère.*

⁵ *La Désert et le Soudan.*

of languages. His *Comparative History*—a standard work—has been already referred to. The Phœnicians are his especial province. His work on the mission to Phœnicia,¹ a government expedition of archæological survey in which he took part in 1860, is recognised as the highest authority on that ancient people; and he has completed the Phœnician department of the great collection of Semitic inscriptions.² On the Arabs he has written much which carries great weight. His exhaustive monograph on Averroes³ is a complete guide to one of the most complex byways of philosophical history. His essay on Mahomet,⁴ and his articles on Hariri, Maçoudi, Ibn-Batoutah,⁵ compress into a short compass the very spirit of Arab literature and life. It is, however, on the history and literature of the Jews that he has expended most time and thought. Without dwelling on minor performances, in the *Journal de la Société Asiatique* and elsewhere, we may notice first his translations of Job⁶ and of Solomon's Song,⁷ as admittedly equal to any German work for thoroughness and accuracy, while showing in their style and in the introductions prefixed to them a literary grace and insight which are M. Renan's own. The preface to the Book of Job, in particular, may well lead us to look forward with a peculiar interest to that *History of the Jewish People* by which it is understood that M. Renan

¹ *Mission de Phénicie.*

² *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum.*

³ *Averroès et l'Averroïsme.*

⁴ In the *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse.*

⁵ In the *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Voyages.*

⁶ *Le Livre de Job*, etc.

⁷ *Le Cantique des Cantiques*, etc.

purposes to complete his account of the origins from which Christianity sprang. In the meantime it is with the birth of Christ that his systematic treatment of Jewish history and literature begins. The *Vie de Jésus*, which forms the first volume of the *Origines du Christianisme*, owes both to its merits and its defects a celebrity which has tended to cast into the background other works of its author, which possess at least equal value. The *Vie de Jésus* has been followed by *Les Apôtres*, *Saint Paul*, *l'Antechrist*, *les Évangiles*, *L'Église Chrétienne*, and the series has now been concluded by *Marc Aurèle*, which last volume leaves the Christian Church an established power in the full light of day.

M. Renan's labours, however, have not been confined to the Semitic race. Turning to the Aryan stock we find to begin with an essay on the Primitive Grammar of India, and for the Persian branch, an article on the *Schahnameh*.¹ On the Greco-Roman branch of the family he has written much of interest, though not often in a separate form. Essays on the Greek grammarians, on the philology of the ancients, on the Secret History of Procopius, indicate unlooked-for stores of learning held in reserve. The volumes on the Origin of Christianity deal with the history of the earlier Empire with a vividness and mastery unequalled by any other historian of that age. In Marcus Aurelius, especially, he has found a hero on whom he can dwell with all the eloquence of complete sympathy.

¹ In the *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Voyages*.

Descending now to the Latin nations of modern times, we find an interesting essay on Mussulman Spain, and two on the Revolutions of Italy, and Dom Luigi Tosti,¹ the second of which will be recognised as a masterpiece by all who are familiar with the great story of Italy's resurrection. French history may conduct us from the Latin to the Celtic branch of the Aryan stock. And here, too, M. Renan fills a leading place. He has been an important collaborator in the great Benedictine history of French literature, which, begun a century and a half ago, is still far from completion. In conjunction with M. Victor le Clerc, he supplied the history of the fourteenth century, taking the progress of the fine arts as his especial department. His history of Gothic architecture is full of learning and originality, though suggesting (were this a fitting occasion) many topics of æsthetic controversy. Minor essays on the cause of the decline of mediæval art, on the sources of the French tongue, on the farce of Patelin, etc., indicate how completely he has made this period his own. The numerous essays on Frenchmen of more modern date, Thierry, de Sacy, Cousin, Lamennais, Béranger, Villemain, belong rather to literature or to philosophy than to history proper. To conclude, then, with the Celtic stock, to which M. Renan himself belongs. Nothing that he has written is better than his essay on the poetry of the Celtic races,² a model of

¹ In *Essais de Morale et de Critique*.

² In the same volume.

that kind of composition, erudite without ostentation, and attractive in the highest degree without loss of dignity or of precision.

I will not extend the list farther. It will be obvious that M. Renan has not spared his pains; that his opinions are not founded on a narrow historical induction, on a one-sided acquaintance with the development of the mind of man.

We must now inquire what are the main lines of the teaching which he can support, if necessary, by so varied an appeal to the lessons of the past. This teaching resolves itself into three main branches—educational, political, and religious. I might add the heading of philosophy, under which one at least of his most attractive works would seem naturally to fall.¹ But his own view, as indicated in his essay on the Future of Metaphysics, is less ambitious, and prefers to regard philosophy rather as a comprehensive term for the mere aggregate of the highest generalisations than as forming a distinct and coherent department of human study.

M. Renan's educational convictions do not need any elaborate historical support; nor will they be openly disputed in this country. They are, briefly, that the higher instruction should be untrammelled, and that it should be thorough. That the most competent teachers should be appointed, irrespective of any considerations of sect or party; that they should then be

¹ *Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques.*

allowed to exercise their functions without interference from Church or State ; and, on the other hand, that it is their imperative duty to follow truth with their best efforts whithersoever she may lead ; these are the substantive themes of many essays of M. Renan's, whether he is praising the Institut for its catholicity, or the Collège de France for its independence, or the Academy for its permanent and stable power. These topics, indeed, may seem little more than truisms, but truisms may acquire a certain dignity when a man is called upon to suffer for their truth ; and it so happens that M. Renan's own career contains an episode which well illustrates the dangers to which honest and candid teaching may still sometimes be exposed, and the spirit in which such dangers should be met.

In the year 1857 the death of M. Quatremère left vacant the chair of "the Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac languages" at the Collège de France. The Collège de France was founded by Francis I. expressly for the purpose of providing a lay and independent arena for the exposition of studies which were treated by the Sorbonne under closer restrictions, and in accordance with traditional rules. There is at the Collège de France no theological chair, nor has the institution ever been connected with any Church. The functions of its Hebrew professor are in no way hortatory or polemical ; on the contrary, it is the place above all others in France where real philological teaching, unbiassed by considerations external to philology, may fairly be

looked for. The appointment virtually rests with the other professors and with the members of the Academy of Inscriptions, whose recommendation, addressed to the Minister of Public Instruction, is ratified as a matter of course.

Perhaps through some timidity as to the result of either the appointment or the non-appointment of M. Renan to the vacant chair, the Emperor did not fill it up till 1861. In that year the Minister of Instruction inquired, according to custom, what candidate the existing professors propose to nominate. These professors and the Academy of Inscriptions nominated M. Renan, and his appointment was confirmed in January 1862.

It is customary at the Collège de France, as in most other academical lecture-rooms, that a newly-elected professor, of however special and minute a character his subsequent teaching is to be, should take in his inaugural discourse a wider scope, and give some general sketch of the manner in which he conceives his subject. To have evaded this custom in this special instance would have been to abandon, on the threat of personal inconveniences to follow, the right and duty of those to whom the higher education of their country is entrusted to speak with frankness, though of course with moderation, on all such topics as fall within the competence of their chair. M. Renan did not thus shrink. He gave a masterly sketch of the function of the Semitic peoples in the history of civilisation, and needing to touch on the

greatest Figure whom those races have produced, he described him as "un homme incomparable—si grand que, bien qu'ici tout doive être jugé au point de vue de la science positive, je ne voudrais pas contredire ceux qui, frappés du caractère exceptionnel de son œuvre, l'appellent Dieu." "Jesus of Nazareth," said St. Peter, "a man approved of God among you;" and if M. Renan had been willing by a turn of phrase to use the Apostle's words for his own, it would have been hard for the orthodox to find an occasion of censure. As it was, the demonstration which had been prepared against him was held in check by a large body of students who maintained order during his lecture and accompanied him home. He had announced that his future lectures were to be purely grammatical; but the imperial government, which was at that time much under the influence of the clerical party, pronounced that a continuance of the course would be dangerous, and closed his lecture-room. M. Renan lectured for two years in his own apartments. The government then announced to him his appointment to a post in the Imperial Library, a post which he could not fill so long as he held the professorship, at the same time abolishing the emolument of his professorship by an ingenious meanness of administrative detail. M. Renan refused to accept the post in the Library, or to resign the professorship. Another professor was appointed, held the post for a few years, and died. On his death in 1870 M. Renan was again selected by the

Collège de France and the Institut as the fitting candidate. And now the Emperor consented, but M. Ollivier shuffled, and the war came. It was the Government of National Defence which, in November 1870, signed the decree which re-established the dispossessed professor in the chair which he now fills.

The Grand Inquisitor, like Pope and Pagan, has in our age lost most of his teeth. There can hardly be a surer way, and this episode shows it, of conferring a benefit on a man of learning and virtue than by persecuting him for his opinions' sake. He gets all the advantage of adversity without disablement, and obloquy without disgrace. He has the opportunity (too rarely occurring in the *savant's* quiet career) of showing courage, sincerity, and dignity of character. And meantime his influence is not impaired but increased; his books become more widely known, his personality is invested with greater interest. The time, moreover, is past when anything can be done for opinions accounted orthodox by raising those who hold them to posts for which they are otherwise unfit. These are not days when income can give influence, or official precedence make proselytes.

Attempts of this kind, to make conformity with received opinions rather than intellectual competence the first requisite in a teacher, have, in fact, their origin in a mood of mind of which religious intolerance is only one manifestation. They spring from a deep-rooted infidelity as to the principles themselves

on which all higher education rests. Those principles are, that it is good to have a mind as active and open as possible, and to know all the truth about the universe which can be known. But though these principles are seldom openly contested, many men,—most even of those whose business in life it is to apply them,—hold them in reality in a quite different form. They hold that it is good to have a mind well trained for purposes of work or enjoyment, and to know enough about the universe to enable us to live well and happily. Now this second view, though it may in some minds be almost identical with the first, may also drop in other minds to a level at which mental training becomes little more than a repertory of artifices, and knowledge than an accomplishment. The tendency to keep the mind shut and to be contented without knowledge is so strong that it is only by steadfastly regarding knowledge as an end in itself that we can be safe against its gradual limitation, till even the arts which affect our material well-being are starved by its decay.

The force with which Germany has grasped this principle has been, it need hardly be said, one of the main elements in all her successes. She has had more scientific curiosity, more interest in truth for truth's own sake, than any other nation, and she has reaped her reward in the serious and painstaking habit of mind, open to new information, and resolved to see things as they are, which has in its turn led her to

military and political greatness. It has been one of M. Renan's life-long tasks to hold up to his countrymen the example of Germany, to insist on the need of laborious thoroughness in study, on the nobility of the self-forgetfulness which makes a man neglect his own fame in the interest of his subject. Some of his most striking essays,—those, for instance, on Creuzer, Eugène Burnouf, J. V. le Clerc,—are devoted to the setting forth of such a life with a kindred enthusiasm. And both in France and England such exhortations are greatly needed. Physical science, indeed, is in both countries ardently pursued. But the philological and historical sciences are apt in France to form the mere material for rhetoric, in England the mere machinery of education.

One of the main directions in which the influence of M. Renan's historical-mindedness is felt is in his utterances on politics. There, at any rate, the study of history has saved him from any tendency to rashness or idealism. It has taught him, above all, the doctrine of compensations,—the application, as one may say, of the law of the conservation of energy to states and nations, which assures us that more than a certain sum of efficiency cannot be extracted from any one race, and that, after gross errors have been avoided, what is gained in force by the body politic in one direction is likely to be lost in another. On the examples of this thesis M. Renan delights to dwell, from the Berbers, enjoying absolute social equality and

government by commune at the cost of all national or even tribal coherence, to the German Empire, its collective strength based on a fusion of bureaucracy and fendalism which, in M. Renan's view, must necessarily involve the painful self-abnegation of the mass of men.

One may say, indeed, that the greatness of a nation depends on her containing a certain amount, but only a certain amount, of unselfishness; on her keeping her spiritual life neither above nor below a certain temperature. She can achieve no powerful collective existence if public virtue in her have grown so cold that she contains no class ready to make serious sacrifices for the general good. And on the other hand, if the popular devotion to some impersonal idea be raised to too glowing a pitch, the nation loses in concentration what she gains in diffusion; her idea takes possession of the world, but she herself is spent in the effort which gave it birth. Greece perishing exhausted with her creation of art and science; Rome disappearing, like leaven in the mass, in her own universal empire; Judæa expiating by political nullity and dispersion the spiritual intensity which imposed her faiths, in one form or another, upon civilised man; such are some of the examples with which M. Renan illustrates this general view. And such, to some extent, is his conception of the French Revolution. In the spiritual exhaustion and unsettlement which have followed on that crisis, France has felt the reaction

from that fervour of conviction and proselytism with which she sent forth her "principles of '89" to make the circuit of the world. But those principles were not wholly salutary nor wholly true; they were the insistence — exaggerated by the necessary recoil from privilege and inequality — on one side only of the political problem, on the individual right to enjoyment without regard to those ties and subordinations which make the permanence and the unity of states.

The French Revolution, indeed, was but the manifestation, in a specially concentrated form, of a phase through which the awakening consciousness of the masses must needs conduct every civilised nation in turn. Its characteristic assertions of the independence, the essential equality of men, are apt to lead, if rashly applied, not to any improved social structure, but to sheer individualism, to the jealous spirit of democracy which resents the existence of lives fuller and richer than its own. This spread of an enlightened selfishness is in the moral world, as M. Renan has remarked, a fact of the same nature as the exhaustion of coal-fields in the physical world. In each case the existing generation is living upon, and not replacing, the economies of the past. A few words of explanation will make this view clearer. As a general rule, we may roughly say that the self-regarding impulses of brutes and men are limited in the last resort by the need of a certain amount of social instinct, if their family or their species is to be preserved at all. And

this *instinct*, if it may be said without paradox, is often more moral than *choice*. For reasoning powers, though probably acquired as the result of highly social habits, sometimes partially destroy the very habits out of which they arose, by suggesting that more immediate pleasure can be obtained by reversing them. For instance, male monkeys are not systematically cruel to female monkeys. Instinct teaches them to divide the work of the family in the way best suited to the attainment of healthy offspring. But in Australian savages the family instinct is interfered with by a reasoning process which shows them that men are stronger than women, and can unite to make them their slaves. They enslave and maltreat their women, with the result that they injure their progeny, and maintain so low a level of vigour that a slight change in their surroundings puts an end to the race. Something of the same kind is the contrast between the feudal peasant of the middle ages and the self-seeking artisan of the present day. The mediæval peasant owed his very existence to the high development of certain social instincts,—fidelity, self-abnegation, courage in defence of the common weal. And thus in a Highland clan, for instance, the qualities which enable a society to hold together existed almost in perfection. The sum of social instincts with which each of its members was born far exceeded any such self-seeking impulses as might (for instance) have led him in time of war to enrich himself by betraying his chief.

Instinctive virtue of this kind, however, can hardly be maintained except by pressure from without. As civilisation develops, the need for it becomes less apparent. The self-abnegation which in a rude society was plainly needed to prevent the tribe's extinction now seems to serve only to maintain a pampered and useless court or aristocracy. The proletariat gradually discover that they are the stronger party, and their instinctive reverence for their hereditary leaders dies away. If circumstances are favourable they devote themselves to pleasure and money-making; if not, they rise, perhaps, as in 1789, and "decapitate the nation," leaving themselves incapable of self-government, and certain to be made the prey of military force, the only power left standing among them.

Meantime it is not only the proletariat whose coherence in the body politic is loosened by the dictates of an enlightened selfishness. The feudal leader, quite as much as his retainer, subsisted by virtue of his possession of certain social instincts,—courage in defending his clan, and a rude identification of his interests and pleasures with theirs. Even amid the more refined scenes of the Renaissance the noble had still much in common with the peasant. The young aristocrat (to take M. Renan's illustration), whose marriage procession defiled through the streets of Gubbio or Assisi was delighting the populace and himself by the same action. His instinct was to share his pleasures

thus with the commonalty, and he enjoyed them the more for so doing.

But as civilisation becomes more assured there is no longer anything which the nobleman feels plainly called on to do for the common people, who are protected by law without his aid. And moreover, as numbers get vaster, and differences of wealth more extreme, the rich man finds his pleasure more and more aloof from the poor. His instincts, both of leadership and of companionship, tend to decay; he lives in some luxurious city, and converts his territorial primacy into a matter of rents.

Individualism, in short, as opposed to active patriotism, becomes increasingly the temptation of rich and poor alike. Questions as to forms of government, rivalries of dynasties, are of small importance as compared with the progress of this disintegrating tendency, which forms a kind of dry-rot in all civilised states. The reserve forces of inherited and instinctive virtue (to return to the simile of the coal-fields) are becoming exhausted, and while we live in a society which has been rendered possible by the half-conscious self-devotions of the past, we have not as yet discovered a source of energy which shall maintain our modern states at the moral temperature requisite for organic life.

Reflections of this nature, long familiar to M. Renan, were forced upon all Frenchmen by the Franco-German war. That contest, as has been often observed, repeated the old histories of the incursions of the bar-

barians into the declining Roman empire in its contrast between the *naïve* and self-devoted unity of the one force, and the self-seeking apathy which ruined the other. The main difference was that the Germans, having applied their patient efforts to self-education as well as to warfare, united in a certain sense the advantages of a civilised with the advantages of a barbarous people.

The war passed by, and M. Renan's was perhaps the wisest voice which discussed the maladies of France. France seemed to have before her then the choice of two paths; the one leading through national self-denial to national strength, the other through democratic laxity to a mass of private well-being, likely to place its own continuance above all other aims. In a collection of political essays,¹ published in 1871, M. Renan advocates the sterner policy in a series of weighty suggestions too detailed for insertion here. Yet he feels the difficulty of carrying out this *régime* of penitence and effort without the help of a commanding central power. He regrets (for he had already foreseen) the impossibility of placing at the head of France a strong dynasty, capable of direction to serious ends. All her dynasties have fallen; the experience of 1830, 1848, 1870, has shown that not one of them can survive a single blow; nor can the departed instinct of loyalty be revived by partisans wielding the weapons of superstition, corruption, insolent bravado. Already when M. Renan wrote there seemed no choice but a

¹ *La Réforme Intellectuelle et Morale de la France.*

Republic; and a striking passage (put, it is fair to say, into the mouth of an imaginary speaker) will indicate with how mixed a hope he regarded that prospect:—

“Des réformes, supposant que la France abjure ses préjugés démocratiques, sont des réformes chimériques. La France, croyez-le, restera un pays de gens aimables, doux, honnêtes, droits, gais, superficiels, pleins de bon cœur, de faible intelligence politique; elle conservera son administration médiocre, ses comités entêtés, ses corps routiniers, persuadée qu'ils sont les premiers du monde; elle s'enfoncera de plus en plus dans cette voie de matérialisme, de républicanisme vulgaire vers laquelle tout le monde moderne, excepté la Prusse et la Russie, paraît se tourner.”

Such a state, in M. Renan's view, can never hope to rival Prussia's strength in the field,—a strength founded on a social organisation which can transform itself into a military organisation when need is, without shock, unwillingness, or delay. The revenge of France, he thinks, is likely to be rather of that insidious kind which saps the enemy's robust self-denial by the spectacle of ease and luxury, and gradually draws down its neighbours to a self-indulgent impotence like its own.

The events of the dozen years which have elapsed since this prophecy was uttered may seem to have tended towards its fulfilment. On the one hand there is visible in Germany an increased impatience of the hardships of the Prussian *régime*, a growing exodus of the lower class to states which demand less of risk and

self-sacrifice from their constituent members. And on the other hand the prestige of Paris as the city of pleasure has revived; the wealth of France, and her eagerness in the pursuit of wealth, are greater than ever before. Her habits and institutions (as M. Renan predicted) are undoubtedly assimilating her not to Germany, but to the United States. The example of the United States,—capable, under strong excitement, of putting forth such military energy from the midst of a society apparently so self-seeking and incoherent, may well prevent us from asserting that democratic France can never wage a successful war with Germany. But such strong impulses will be rare, and for the most part it would seem that we must look on France as swelling that dominant current of the modern world which sets in the direction of mere wealth and luxury, and threatens to dissolve the higher aims and unity of nations in its enervating flow.

“Without war,” says Von Moltke, “the world would stagnate, and lose itself in materialism.” The problem is to prevent this; to secure that as the world gradually changes from a place of struggle into a place of enjoyment the change shall not sap the roots of virtue or the structure of society. As the old social superiorities, defined by birth, and resting ultimately on force and conquest, tend to disappear, we must create new social superiorities, marked enough to compel the respect of the multitude to their fitting leaders, and attained by enough of effort to give to the character

of those leaders the same force and self-confidence which were previously won in war.

In pursuing this train of thought M. Renan surprises the English reader by his apparent want of acquaintance with the similar speculations of Comte. Yet these two greatest thinkers of modern France traverse to a considerable extent the same ground. Fully to note their points of agreement and of difference would demand a separate essay. They agree in the spirit,—historical, scientific, *positive* in the best sense of the term,—in which they approach these social problems, and which guarantees them alike against revolutionary vehemence and against the mere sentimentality of reaction. On the other hand, Comte's confident dogmatism, and the prophetic and hieratic pretensions of his later years, are little in accord with M. Renan's gentle and sceptical irony, his strain of aristocratic nonchalance. In their respective views as to the nature of the government of the future these divergences are plainly marked. Comte's hierarchy of bankers is the conception of a complacently industrial, a frankly optimistic age; while in M. Renan's fastidious attitude towards material prosperity we discern a certain loss of moral prestige which wealth has tended to undergo even while its practical predominance in the world has increased. Wealth is, of course, the form of superiority which the multitude tend more and more exclusively to respect as the traditional reverence for birth declines. And, in some cases, wealth is a

tolerable criterion of merit, as indicating diligence and ability in those by whom it is made, habits of refinement in those by whom it is inherited. But, unfortunately, it becomes increasingly evident that the criterion is too rough; there is too much ill-gotten wealth in the world to allow us to respect it without inquiry; and the dishonest rich man is not merely not better, but is more actively mischievous than his neighbours. America, in short, has become our type of a country which has sought wealth with success; and America is not a country where kings are philosophers and philosophers are kings. Virtue, again, (the criterion which we should all prefer), is not easy to recognise on a public arena, and its genuineness is not recommended to us when it loudly claims recognition. We are driven back upon intellectual superiority; and here the problem is to find that disinterested wisdom which is, in fact, a part of virtue, and not the mere plausibility of skilful egoism. There is no certain method of attaining this, but the method which looks most promising is to raise a considerable number of the citizens to a pitch of knowledge and culture which *ought*, at least, to teach them to look on human affairs as philosophers, and not as adventurers or as partisans. And this, at least, we can do; by the thoroughness of our higher education we can create a new aristocracy, an aristocracy which will not press its services on the multitude, but will constitute a weighty court of appeal from popular passion and prejudice. Some such position,

indeed, has long been held by men of talent in France, owing to the inadequacy of the French *noblesse*, which never performed important political functions, and has now practically disappeared. And in other countries, too, the public is learning to recognise a sort of senate in one group of learned men,—in the professors, namely, of the physical sciences. Their superior knowledge can be palpably proved and is readily believed in; their advice is urgently needed about many matters, and the decisiveness of utterance natural to men much occupied with definite and soluble problems is in itself convincing to those who wish for guidance. But to the devotees of the *historical* sciences the world has hitherto paid less attention. Philologists cannot hit upon lucrative inventions; rival critics cannot demonstrate their historical insight by a crucial experiment. The historian is not so convincing as the physicist, nor does he labour so manifestly for the practical good of mankind. Comte, indeed, claimed to have done away with both these distinctions. He claimed to have given to the science of society a precision which enabled it to be at once applied as an art, and he was eager to subordinate even the highest speculations to the actual needs of men. M. Renan, on the other hand, while desiring no such direct dogmatic influence, is not disposed to shape the course of his researches according to their immediate bearing on the common weal. That “passion for truth in itself, without any mixture of pride or vanity,” which Comte condemns as “intense

egoism," is the very breath of M. Renan's being; and, as is wont to be the case when truth rather than utility is aimed at, there are many matters on which he is unwilling to preach any very definite doctrine. "La vérité est dans une nuance," he says; and again, "Qui sait si la finesse d'esprit ne consiste pas à s'abstenir de conclure?" It is the part of men like this to protest against all extreme views, all patriotic illusions, to sit dispersed amid the countries of civilised men, and to try their hopes and creeds by an appeal to the laws of their own being, and to their own forgotten past.

"Ex necessitate est," the old saying runs, "ut sit aliquis philosophus in specie humanâ." In order that humanity may be fully conscious of itself there must, we instinctively feel, be somewhere on earth a life disengaged from active or personal aims, and absorbed in the mere exercise of intellectual curiosity. And such a life, which sometimes seems to us to lie outside all human interests and emotions, will sometimes also appear as the centre of them all. For the universe in which man is placed so far transcends his power to grasp it,—the destinies amidst which his future lies are so immense and so obscure,—that the most diverse manners of bearing ourselves among them will in turn occupy our full sympathies, satisfy our changing ideal. Sometimes a life of action seems alone worthy of a man; we feel that we exist in vain unless we manage to leave some beneficent trace of our existence on the world around us; unless we enrich it with art, civilise

it by education, extend it by discovery, pacify it with law. Sometimes, again, our relations to the Unseen will take possession of the soul; thought is lost in love, and emotion seems to find its natural outlet in spiritual aspiration and prayer. But there is a mood, again, in which all action, all emotion even, looks futile as the sport of a child; when it is enough to be a percipient atom swayed in the sea of things; when the one aim of the universe seems to be consciousness of itself and all that is to exist only that it may at last be known.

There was a time when all these strains of feeling could co-exist effectively in a single heart. Plato, "the spectator of all time and of all existence," was also the centre of the religion of the world. And if this can rarely be so now, it is not necessarily or always that saints and philosophers in themselves are smaller men, but rather that man's power of thought and emotion has not expanded in proportion to the vast increase of all that is to be felt and known. There has been a specialisation of emotions as well as of studies and industries; it has become necessary that what is gained in extension should in some degree be lost in intensity, and that the wisdom that comprehends the world should cease to be compatible with the faith that overcomes it.

Let us not, then, expect all things from any man. Let us welcome the best representative of every mood of the mind. And if the philosophic mood can scarcely

find expression without some pitying consciousness of the ignorance and error which envelop the multitude of men, let us remember that this compassionating tone, though it can hardly be made agreeable to the mass of men, may nevertheless be most salutary. For so much knowledge is now diffused among men of ordinary education that it is difficult to remain steadily conscious how small a fraction this is of what it imports us to know. It is not that we fail in admiration for eminent talents; never, perhaps, has eminent talent been more admired. But we cannot habitually realise to ourselves our incapacity to form true opinions; we decide where doctors disagree; we rush in where a Goethe has feared to tread. We have to make up our minds, we say, for we have to act. Be it so, but we must be content to be reminded that in that case our decision proves nothing, except that we were anxious to decide.

In the domain of the physical sciences we are less tempted thus rashly to dogmatise, and the blunders to which our dogmatism leads us are more easily seen. It is when we deal with questions affecting the inner being, the profounder beliefs of men, that we are able contentedly to forget that these beliefs repose ultimately on historical and philological considerations with which we have made no effort to acquaint ourselves. Yet as the conception of science broadens and deepens, this apathy must pass away; and already during recent years there has been a marked awaken-

ing in the European mind, a growing perception that the historical sciences will prove to be as essential to our guidance through life as the physical sciences have already shown themselves to be. "L'union de la philologie et de la philosophie," says M. Renan, "de l'érudition et de la pensée, devrait être le caractère du travail intellectuel de notre époque." And again, "C'est aux sciences de l'humanité qu'on demandera désormais les éléments des plus hautes spéculations."

But desisting from further summary of discussions whose fulness and subtlety make them almost impossible to summarise, let us test, by a few concrete instances, the value of this philosophical outlook on contemporary history. M. Renan has lived in close contact with the French and German people, and with the "Bretons bretonnants" who linger around his early home. Let us inquire if there be anything in his way of regarding these nations which indicates a mind accustomed to an impartial weighing of the fates of men; anything beyond the conventional glorification of France, the conventional bitterness against Germany; anything which penetrates beneath surface characteristics to a race's true genius and essential power.

And inasmuch as philosophy is an aroma which should penetrate every leaflet of the tree, I will take my illustration of M. Renan's insight into the character of his own countrymen from a short article on the

Theology of Béranger,¹ called forth by the appearance of a family edition of the works of the poet of *Lisette and Chambertin*, at first sight so ill-adapted for domestic perusal.

“‘De toutes les parties du système poétique de Béranger,’ says M. Renan, after some admirable comments on the moral side of his poems, ‘celle qui me surprit le plus, quand je le lus pour la première fois, ce fut sa théologie. Je connaissais peu alors l’esprit français ; je ne savais pas les singulières alternatives de légèreté et de pesanteur, de timidité étroite et de folle témérité, qui sont un des traits de son caractère. Toutes mes idées furent troublées quand je vis que ce joyeux convive, que je m’étais figuré mécréant au premier chef, parlait de Dieu en langage fort arrêté, et engageait sa maîtresse à

‘Lever les yeux vers ce monde invisible
Où pour toujours nous nous réunissons.’

“‘La naïveté toute bourgeoise de cette théologie d’un genre nouveau, cette façon de s’incliner le verre en main devant le Dieu que je cherchais avec tremblement, furent pour moi un trait de lumière. A l’indignation que me causa l’idée d’une confraternité religieuse avec ceux qui adorent de la sorte se mêla le sentiment de ce qu’il y a de fatalement limité dans les manières de voir et de sentir de la France. L’incurable médiocrité religieuse de ce grand pays, orthodoxe jusque dans sa gaieté, me fut révélée, et le Dieu des bons gens m’apparut comme l’éternel dieu gaulois contre lequel lutterait en vain toute tentative de philosophie et de religion épurée.’”

And from this text he argues how closely akin are

¹ In *Questions Contemporaines*.

licence and bigotry ; how it is the same spirit of contented shallowness which in each direction is impatient of modest self-restraint ; which leads to easy vulgarity in the domain of morals, empty rhetoric in the domain of literature, ready and confident dogmatism in the domain of religion. To protest against each of these in turn has been the mission of M. Renan, and surely by no other example or exhortation could he have deserved better of France.

It is needless to say that he can also praise his country with grace and enthusiasm, though never with that monstrous adulation to which she is sometimes too willing to lend her ear. More remarkable is the generous candour with which, in the very shock and crisis of the war, when nothing was heard on either side but outrage and execration, the French philosopher did justice to the impulse which urged Germany to assert her unity and her place among great nations.¹

“S’il y a une nationalité qui ait un droit évident d’exister en toute son indépendance, c’est assurément la nationalité allemande. L’Allemagne a le meilleur titre national, je veux dire un rôle historique de première importance, une âme, une littérature, des hommes de génie, une conception particulière des choses divines et humaines. L’Allemagne a fait la plus importante révolution des temps modernes, la Réforme ; en outre, depuis un siècle, l’Allemagne a produit un des plus beaux développements intellectuels qu’il y ait

¹ *Lettre à M. Strauss.*

jamais eu, un développement qui a, si j'ose le dire, ajouté un degré de plus à l'esprit humain en profondeur et en étendue, si bien que ceux qui n'ont pas participé à cette culture nouvelle sont à ceux qui l'ont traversée comme celui qui ne connaît que les mathématiques élémentaires est à celui qui connaît le calcul différentiel."

He proceeds to draw a picture of what united Germany might become, the Prussian leaven disappearing when it has leavened the whole lump, and leaving a nation open, perhaps, beyond any other, to the things of the spirit; more capable, perhaps, than any other of founding a State organisation on a scientific and rational basis. And he concludes with a dignified appeal to the moral intervention of Europe in the present extremity, a dignified protest against the dismemberment and degradation of France.

On reading the letter to M. Strauss from which this passage is taken—a letter full of large general views and scrupulous candour—one is tempted to think that it must be an easy thing for a professed philosopher to retain his philosophy even, as the ancients said, "when earth is mixed with fire." A curious incident to which this correspondence gave rise may be quoted, however, as showing how difficult it is in these moments of excitement, even for the controversialist whose arguments are supported by thirty legions, to maintain a tone on which he can afterwards look back with satisfaction. The correspondence in question was begun by M. Strauss, who

addressed a letter to M. Renan in the *Augsburg Gazette* of the 18th of August 1870. M. Renan caused a translation of this letter to appear in the *Journal des Débats* of the 15th of September,—no easy matter, as may be supposed, in that fury of rage against Germany; and on the 16th of September appeared M. Renan's own reply. The *Augsburg Gazette* refused to insert this reply of M. Renan's; and perhaps no one circumstance was more significant than this of the temper of Germany at the time. There was not a word (it is needless to say) in M. Renan's letter which could give just offence; but, nevertheless, the organ of the victorious nation, having itself challenged a discussion, refused to insert the courteous reply of the vanquished party. It might have been thought that under these circumstances M. Strauss would withdraw with displeasure from his connection with a newspaper which took this view of what was fair and honourable. But it was not so. On the contrary, he wrote a reply to M. Renan's letter, and inserted it in the *Augsburg Gazette* on the 2d of October 1870, at a time when the Prussian blockade of Paris of course prevented M. Renan from receiving the newspaper. By this ingenious method of controversy M. Strauss was able to appear to challenge a champion of the opposite side to an impartial discussion; then to permit the suppression of that champion's reply; then to write to him again in a still more violent tone (with misrepresentations on which I need not dwell), and to choose a

moment for this rejoinder when his antagonist could not possibly receive or reply to it. All this he did as one philosopher communing with another philosopher, and with the consciousness that he belonged to an entirely virtuous nation, which was justly chastising a nation sunk in ignorance and corruption.

I have said that M. Strauss permitted the suppression in the *Augsburg Gazette* of M. Renan's letter. He chose, however, to give it to the world in another fashion. He translated it into German, and published it, along with his own two letters, for the benefit of a German military infirmary.

The *Nouvelle lettre à M. Strauss* (September 1871), in which M. Renan gently recounts these transactions, and indicates some particulars in which the great German people may seem still to fall short of perfection, affords perhaps as good an instance as this century has to show of the sarcastic power of the French language in hands that can evoke its subtleties and manœuvre its trenchant blade. The paragraph which I quote below appears as if its only anxiety were to make excuses for M. Strauss. But it would be hard to find any passage since Pope's *Atticus*-which it would be more disagreeable to have addressed to one.

“Il est vrai que vous m'avez fait ensuite un honneur auquel je suis sensible comme je le dois. Vous avez traduit vous-même ma réponse, et l'avez réunie dans une brochure à vos deux lettres. Vous avez voulu que cette brochure se vendît au profit d'un établissement d'invalides

allemands. Dieu me garde de vous faire une chicane au point de vue de la propriété littéraire ! L'œuvre à laquelle vous m'avez fait contribuer est d'ailleurs une œuvre d'humanité, et si ma chétive prose a pu procurer quelques cigares à ceux qui ont pillé ma petite maison de Sèvres, je vous remercie de m'avoir fourni l'occasion de conformer ma conduite à quelques-uns des préceptes de Jésus que je crois le plus authentiques. Mais remarquez encore ces nuances légères. Certainement, si vous m'aviez permis de publier un écrit de vous, jamais, au grand jamais, je n'aurais eu l'idée d'en faire une édition au profit de notre Hôtel des Invalides. Le but vous entraîne ; la passion vous empêche de voir ces mièvreries de gens blasés que nous appelons le goût et le tact."

From the temper of mind which calls forth M. Renan's strongest expressions of repulsion, — this temper of domineering dogmatism and blind conceit, — let us pass to the opposite extreme. Let us turn to the race from which M. Renan sprang, the race whose character is traceable in all that he has written. The nationality of the romantic, emotional, unpractical Celt, surviving in his western isles and promontories from an age of less hurrying effort, less sternly-moulded men, has fallen into the background of the modern world. Yet every now and then we are reminded — by some persistent loyalty, as in La Vendée, to a de-throned ideal ; by some desperate incompatibility, as in Ireland, with the mechanism of modern progress — that there exists by our side a nation whose origin, language, memories, differ so profoundly from our own.

M. Renan is a Celt who has become conscious of his Celtic nature; a man in whom French *savoir-vivre*, German science, are perpetually contending with alien and ineradicable habits of mind,—“comme cet animal fabuleux de Ctésias, qui se mangeait les pattes sans s'en douter.” This mixed nature, the result, as one may say, of a modern intelligence working on a temperament that belongs to a far-off past, and making of him “un romantique protestant contre le romantisme, un utopiste prêchant en politique le terre-à-terre, un idéaliste se donnant inutilement beaucoup de peine pour paraître bourgeois,” has rendered M. Renan's works unintelligible and displeasing to many readers. “Twy-natured is no nature” is the substance of many a comment on the great historian's union of effusive sympathy and destructive criticism. But there is a sense in which a man may be double-minded without being hypocritical, and the warp and woof of his nature, shot with different colours, may produce for this very reason a more delicate and changing charm. In his essay on Celtic poetry M. Renan has abandoned himself to his first predilections. Nowhere is he more unreservedly himself than when he is depicting that gentle romance, that half humorous sentiment, that devout and pensive peace, which breathe alike in Breton, in Welsh, in Irish legend, and which, after so many a journeying into the imaginary or the invisible world, find their truest earthly ideal in the monasteries of Iona or Lindisfarne. Here it is that we discern

his spiritual kin; among these saints and dreamers whose fancy is often too unrestrained, their emotion too femininely sensitive, for commerce with the world, these populations who to the faults inherent in weakness have too often added the faults that are begotten of oppression, but yet have never wholly sunk to commonness, nor desisted from an unworldly hope. There have been races which have had a firmer grasp of this life. There have been races which have risen on more steady and soaring wing when they would frame their conceptions of another. But there has been no race, perhaps, which has borne witness more unceasingly, by its weakness as by its strength, to that strange instinct in man's inner being which makes him feel himself as but a pilgrim here; which rejects as unsatisfying all of satisfaction that earth can bring, and demands an unknown consolation from an obscurely encompassing Power.

“‘O frères de la tribu obscure,’ exclaims M. Renan, ‘au foyer de laquelle je puisai la foi à l’invisible, humble clan de laboureurs et de marins, à qui je dois d’avoir conservé la vigueur de mon âme en un pays éteint, en un siècle sans espérance, vous errâtes sans doute sur ces mers enchantées où notre père Brandan cherchait la terre de promesse; vous parcourûtes avec saint Patrice les cercles de ce monde que nos yeux ne savent plus voir. . . . Inutiles en ce monde, qui ne comprend que ce qui le dompte ou le sert, fuyons ensemble vers l’Éden splendide des joies de l’âme, celui-là même que nos saints virent dans leurs songes. Consolons-nous par nos chimères, par notre noblesse, par

notre dédain. Qui sait si nos rêves, à nous, ne sont pas plus vrais que la réalité? Dieu m'est témoin, vieux pères, que ma seule joie, c'est que parfois je songe que je suis votre conscience, et que par moi vous arrivez à la vie et à la voix.' ”

Enough, perhaps, has now been said to give a general conception of the sum of powers and tendencies which M. Renan brings to bear on the complex problems of man's life and destiny. We have seen that his mind is stored with wide-reaching knowledge, thoroughly penetrated with the scientific spirit. We have seen at the same time that he is by instinct conservative; that his sympathies are aristocratic rather than democratic; but aristocratic in the highest sense, as desiring to fortify or replace the aristocracy of birth by an aristocracy of unselfish wisdom, which may serve as a barrier against the ignoble deference too often paid to wealth alone. We have seen, again, that this philosophy which he preaches is in himself no merely nominal or idle thing; but has enabled him not only to bear himself with dignified firmness under the mild persecution of modern days, but also—a harder achievement—to recognise, though a Frenchman, the faults of France, and in the crisis of an embittered struggle to admit with generous largeness the essential worth and mission of the foe. Lastly, we have traced his sympathies to their deeper roots, and have discerned in his vein of emotion—ever between a smile and a sigh—the latest self-expression of a gentle old-world race, the dreamy prophecies of the Merlin of a later day.

We shall thus, it may be hoped, be better qualified to estimate M. Renan's views on those great matters to which his thoughts have mainly turned; man's position, namely, in the spiritual universe, as he has himself in different ages regarded it, or as to us it may now appear; and especially the story, full of ever new interest and wonder, which tells how one conception of man's Creator and his destiny has overcome the rest, and one life of perfect beauty has become the model of the civilised world.

II.

Whether or no this modern age be in its actual practice manifesting an increased regard for morals and religion, there seems at least to be no doubt that those subjects occupy now a larger space in its thoughts than has been the case since the Reformation. Discussions of this kind pervade all schools of opinion, and Goethe himself could scarcely in our days maintain his antique impassiveness amid the problems of man's life and destiny. To students of the historical sciences these questions are necessarily of the first importance. A language and a religion are the legacies of every race, and these two things are for the most part indistinguishably fused together into a single record of the minds of far-off men. In Germany and Holland, and less markedly in France and England, the current of research has for some time set strongly in the direction

of the history of religions. And no book of this kind has attained a greater fame, as none has dealt with a theme more important, than M. Renan's *Origines du Christianisme*, now concluded by the volume entitled *Marc-Aurèle*, after occupying twenty years of its author's labours.

Detailed criticism on a learned work of this magnitude would be hardly in place here. It must suffice to indicate some general points of view, often overlooked amid the desultory and acrimonious comment to which a work of such scope and novelty, on themes of such close concern to all, is not unnaturally exposed.

We may remark, in the first place, that M. Renan's great work almost exactly fills up the gap between the two most considerable histories of ancient times to which modern erudition has given birth. Between the foundation of the Roman Empire, where Mommsen ends, and the reign of Commodus, where Gibbon begins, the main event in the world's history is the rise of Christianity, and of this, with much reference to contemporary occurrences, M. Renan treats.

Better examples than these three writers it would be hard to find of the various tempers of mind in which the historian may approach the facts and personages with which he has to deal:—examples of philosophic indifference, of strong and clear convictions, of many-sided sympathy. Gibbon's method lays him least open to criticism, but it is suited only for a Byzantine abasement of human things. Many tracts in his thousand

years of history still seem as if they had been made to suit him; but wherever extraordinary characters or impulses of strong life and passion claim a place on his canvas we feel that all his learning does not save him from being superficial. Mommsen, on the other hand, is by far the most effective as a teacher. A third, if one may so say, in the intellectual triumvirate, with Bismarck and Von Moltke, he hurls upon his readers a greater mass of knowledge with a greater momentum than any of his rivals. Yet through the garb of the historian is sometimes visible the pamphleteer; and the unimpassioned Gibbon would scarcely have repudiated Renan's Jesus so decisively as Mommsen's Cæsar. The chameleon sympathies of M. Renan, his critical *finesse*, his ready emotion, again have both advantages and dangers of their own. On the one hand, they enable him to see more of truth than ordinary men; for insight requires imagination, and the data of history cannot always, like the data of physical science, be best investigated in a "dry light." Rather may we say—if it be allowed to specialise the metaphor—that they often need to fall upon some mind which, like a fluorescent liquid, can give luminosity to rays which were dark before, and extend by its own intimate structure the many-tinted spectrum of the past. On the other hand, he who attempts to descend so deeply into the springs of human thought and feeling cannot but unconsciously lay open also the limitations of his own being. Gibbon may dismiss all

events alike with majestic indifference or a contented sneer. The definite and straightforward judgments of Mommsen give little grasp on their author's idiosyncrasy. But M. Renan,—explaining his characters from within, indicating their subtler interrelations and intimate desires,—attempts much that is usually left to the poet or dramatist; and, like the poet or dramatist, whatever else he is depicting depicts himself. And thus it is that one defect in him—a defect, it is fair to say, in which he does not stand alone among his countrymen—has appeared so conspicuously, and has been so readily seized on by opponents, that it has come to colour the popular conception of him to a quite unjust extent. This is his want—one cannot exactly say of *dignity*, for the master of a style so flexible and so urbane cannot but be dignified whenever he pleases—but of the quality to which the Romans gave the name of *gravitas*, the temper of mind which looks at great matters with a stern simplicity, and which, in describing them, disdains to introduce any intermixture of less noble emotion. Such, at least, has undoubtedly been our English verdict. Yet it is so hard to say in what manner a history which many centuries have held for-sacred is to be retold in the language of historical science, that it is only just to inquire whether others have been more successful, and in what points precisely M. Renan's deficiency lies.

We may admit then—it is impossible to deny it

—that a great part of the so-called orthodox scheme of Bible interpretation is a tradition of the least trustworthy kind, a tradition of mistakes and misrepresentations, which have come down to us from an uncritical and unscrupulous age. We may admit that the German school of theology—more persuasively represented by M. Renan than by any one among their own number—have performed a task of urgent necessity, and have left Biblical exegesis no longer one of the opprobria of historical science. But along with these large admissions large reservations also must be made. The student, whatever his speculative opinions, who is really imbued with the spirit of the New Testament, will assuredly deny—will be tempted to deny even with a touch of indignant scorn—that this recent school of criticism has reproduced that essential spirit with anything like the potency and profundity which may often be found in the comments of an equivocating father or an ill-educated saint. Around the productions of Leyden or Tübingen there hangs the rawness of a revolutionary scheme of things; one feels at every turn that to treat these matters aright there needs not only patience, accuracy, ingenuity, which these men give us, but depth of feeling and width of experience, which they have not got to give. We are impressed, for instance, by Strauss's air of laborious thoroughness as he explains away the wonder and beauty of the Christian story with an arid logic which its very aridity seems to make more convincing. But

our regard for his opinion drops rather suddenly when, as at the close of his *Old and New Faith*, he takes a constructive, an edifying tone. One feels, at least, that it takes a very thorough-going Germanism to enable him to indicate Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, or the libretto of the *Magic Flute*, "which no less a man than Hegel has long ago demonstrated to be a very good text,"¹ as a sample of the consolations to which mankind, disabused of ancient errors, will always be enabled to cling.

Εἴθ' ὄφελ' Ἀργοῦς μὴ διαπτᾶσθαι σκάφος
Κόλχων ἐς αἶαν κνανέας Συμπληγάδας—

Would that the band of adventurous critics had never sailed between the clashing rocks of Tradition and Authority in quest of truth, if the golden treasure is to be set forth for worship by hands like these!

In F. C. Baur, again, the combination of sagacity and *naïveté* is German in a more agreeable way. Much of his work commands our adhesion, all of it deserves our respect. Never was there a more ingenious professor. But his outlook on life has not enabled him to imagine any early Christian writer less ingenious or professorial than himself. To keep well informed of each other's favourite doctrines, and then promptly to issue *Tendenz-Schriften*, or academical programmes, designed, beneath an appearance of amity, to put those doctrines down—such, it seems, was the

¹ *The Old Faith and the New*, p. 418, English translation,

leading preoccupation of these holy men. Nay, to such a pitch of subtlety did they push, in Baur's view, their damning insinuations, that surely the worst fate which pseudo-Paul could have wished for pseudo-Peter, or pseudo-Peter for pseudo-Paul, would have been that he should be called on to explain his own *sous-entendus* to the satisfaction of the Tübingen school.

M. Renan's danger certainly does not lie in the direction of narrowness or pedantry. And indeed French tact, French elegance, French propriety of thought and expression, are so often and so justly proposed as models to our English bluntness and crudity, that there seems some presumption in taking to task, for faults of taste, the greatest living master of French prose. Yet it is surely no insular coldness that makes us shrink, for instance, from the phrase "*roulant d'extases en extases*," as descriptive of the ideally religious man, or dislike the constant repetition of such words as *ravissant* and *délicieux* in connection with the person and teachings of Christ. And when we find M. Renan suggesting that Jesus at Gethsemane may have looked back with a sigh on the young girls of Galilee who, under other circumstances, might have made his bliss, we feel that from the point of view of art alone—supposing that he were telling a tale like that of Prometheus on Caucasus or Hercules on Cæta—the expression is a blunder worse than a blasphemy. A mistake like this brings its own retribution with it, and it would be almost unkind to

wish M. Renan to be fully aware of the extremity of bad taste which almost all his readers find in this unlucky passage. *All* his readers, I was going to say, but I remembered hearing of a sympathetic lady who laid down the *Vie de Jésus* with a sigh, exclaiming, "Quel dommage que tout ça ne finit pas par un mariage!"

A few excisions would remove this sentimental taint, which indeed seldom appears except in the *Vie de Jésus*, as an element in the quasi-poetical tone in which that volume is written; a tone which, to English taste at least, is on M. Renan's lips entirely mistaken and disadvantageous—a gratuitous divergence into a realm which is beyond his mastery.

Another element in M. Renan's "personal equation" may be noticed as sometimes modifying his historical views. I mean his exclusively contemplative life, and the mood of gentle irony which such a life has begotten. In dealing with almost all subjects this disengagement of temper is an unmixed advantage. When the theme is one of the heroes of philosophy—a Marcus Aurelius or a Spinoza—the reader reaps the full benefit of this similarity between author and subject; their kinship in wise elevation and disenchanted calm. But M. Renan's favourite subjects are chosen from a race of men of nature, as he has himself remarked, as different as possible from his own. It is the founders of religions whose career he loves to trace; and it is always perceptible how far his spontaneous sympathy carries him with them, and where his ad-

miration for them becomes almost pity in that they had so little conception of the relativity of truth, the limitations of virtue, the vanity of all things beneath the sun. The Book of Job is the theme of the finest of his Old Testament expositions; the mournful Preacher is in his eyes "the most inspired of the sacred writers."

In a well-known passage he has given a half humorous expression to the kind of provocation excited in his mind by St. Paul's confident self-assurance and dominating force of faith:

"Certes, une mort obscure pour le fougueux apôtre a quelque chose qui nous sourit. Nous aimerions à rêver Paul sceptique, naufragé, abandonné, trahi par les siens, seul, atteint du désenchantement de la vieillesse; il nous plairait que les écailles lui fussent tombées une seconde fois des yeux, et notre incrédulité douce aurait sa petite revanche si le plus dogmatique des hommes était mort triste, désespéré (disons mieux, tranquille), sus quelque rivage ou quelque route de l'Espagne, en disant lui aussi, '*Ergo erravi!*'"

It would, however, be grossly unfair to speak as if M. Renan's peculiar temperament — emotional at once and philosophic — were productive, in his historical pictures, only of distortion and melodrama. So far is this from being the case that there is hardly a page of his history where there may not be found some touch of feeling which has real beauty, some connection of deep significance between early Christian faith and practice and the meditations of other times and men.

In his account of the resurrection, for instance, amidst much which may well seem to us merely futile, he has brought out, as few before him had ever done, what is in one sense the profoundest lesson which the life of Jesus has to teach. He has described, that is to say, the absorbing power with which one high affection may possess the soul ; and most of all where wrongs nobly borne have added to reverence a solemn compassion, and given its last intensity to love. The object of that affection fades from our bodily sight, but stands forth more plainly revealed in its essential beauty ; succeeding life is guided and glorified by the transcendent memory, and love is transfigured into worship in the deep of the heart. M. Renan has had the skill to make us feel how glorious a lot was theirs, who through all perils carried in their bosoms this ineffaceable joy ; how true were the words which said that " kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them."

Again, a kindred spirit of unworldliness has enabled M. Renan to interpret with wise conviction the beatitude of the poor. He has dwelt on the tie which unites all those whose aim it is to subserve the spiritual welfare of men, and who turn with indifference or distaste from the rewards which the world bestows on its material benefactors. Speaking of the sect of those who took this evangelic poverty in its strictest sense he says :—

" Bien que vite dépassé et oublié, l'ébionisme laissa dans

toute l'histoire des institutions chrétiennes un levain qui ne se perdit pas. . . . Le grand mouvement ombrien du XIII^e siècle, qui est, entre tous les essais de fondation religieuse, celui qui ressemblait le plus au mouvement galiléen, se fit tout entier au nom de la pauvreté. François d'Assise, l'homme du monde qui, par son exquise bonté, sa communion délicate, fine et tendre avec la vie universelle, a le plus ressemblé à Jésus, fut un pauvre. . . . L'humanité, pour porter son fardeau, a besoin de croire qu'elle n'est pas complètement payée par son salaire. Le plus grand service qu'on puisse lui rendre est de lui répéter souvent qu'elle ne vit pas seulement de pain."

And again :—

"La noblesse et le bonheur de la pauvreté,—c'était peut-être la plus grande vérité du christianisme, celle par laquelle il a réussi et par laquelle il se survivra. En un sens, tous, tant que nous sommes, savants, artistes, prêtres, ouvriers des œuvres désintéressées, nous avons encore le droit de nous appeler des ébionim. L'ami du vrai, du beau et du bien n'admet jamais qu'il touche une rétribution. Les choses de l'âme n'ont pas de prix ; au savant qui l'éclaire, au prêtre qui la moralise, au poète et à l'artiste qui la charment, l'humanité ne donnera jamais qu'une aumône, totalement disproportionnée avec ce qu'elle reçoit."

It is thus indeed. The evangelic poverty is not so much a deliberate as an unconscious abstinence from that which most men desire ; or if conscious, then conscious not with self-applauding effort, but with the glad indifference of one who has his treasure elsewhere.

It is needless to multiply instances to show that in M. Renan's case, as in all others, the law prevails that to eyes which read aright the book reveals the author, so that the recounters of a history which holds a place for all of greatness and goodness to which man's soul can reach may give, indeed, artistic expression to much which is beyond their ken, but convincing reality to such things only as they themselves have known.

A more perplexing topic remains behind, a topic which it is difficult to discuss briefly, but which cannot be passed over in silence in any serious attempt to estimate the value of M. Renan's work: I mean his treatment of the miraculous element in the Gospel history. I must begin by saying that I do not think that it can be maintained that he is ever consciously unfair. He is not animated, as so many free-thinkers have been, by a spirit of malignity against the Christian faith. On the contrary, his expressed sympathies are always with that faith; and those who cannot understand so vigorous a criticism conducted in so mild a spirit are apt to think him hypocritically enthusiastic and offensively patronising. The fact is that the whole gist of his controversy is included in a single frank assumption. He begins his history by avowedly excluding all that is *miraculous* or *supernatural* from the domain of the scientific historian. When a story is told, he says, which includes such elements as these, we simply know that it is told incorrectly. We may not always be able to give a plausible account of our

own of the events in question. But if we cannot explain the miraculous story we may simply let it alone, and feel certain that there is some explanation to it which it is now impossible to recover.

It is obvious that a wholesale assumption of this kind relieves the sceptical historian from much polemic in detail. He takes, once for all, the full advantage which the present commanding attitude of Science gives him, and he is not obliged, as Voltaire or Gibbon were obliged, to meet each miracle separately with argument or sarcasm. He is not therefore tempted, as they were tempted, to minimise the importance of his theme, or to emphasise its less dignified aspects. On the contrary, he will be disposed to bring out all its meaning, and to show, if he can, that the story possesses a truer grandeur and impressiveness when narrated in the scientific rather than in the theological temper.

To this line of argument we shall best reply, not by controverting his treatment of individual points, but by some such careful definition of the disputed field as may (if this be possible) reduce the conflict between science and orthodoxy from the shape which it too often assumes of a sheer and barren contradiction to some form in which an ultimate reconciliation may be at least conceivable. Let us attempt, therefore, to give the view of each party in its most moderate and non-polemical form. And first let us reject all *question-begging* terms—all phrases such as “violation of the order of Nature,” or “direct interposition of the Deity,”

which are not mere descriptions of recorded facts, but descriptions coloured, the first by anti-theological, the second by theological feeling. Phrases such as these have often been felt as repugnant both by the deeply religious and by the calmly scientific mind. "God," says St. Augustine in a well-known passage,¹ "does nothing against Nature. When we say that He does so we mean that He does something against Nature *as we know it*—in its familiar and ordinary way—but against the highest laws of Nature He no more acts than He acts against Himself."

Following this weighty hint, let us altogether dispense with unproved assumptions and merely polemical antitheses. Let us not oppose *law* and *miracle*, for whatever abnormal phenomena may have occurred must (as we shall all now feel with St. Augustine) have occurred consistently with eternal law. Let us not oppose the *natural* and the *supernatural*, for "God does nothing against Nature," and all that these two terms can mean is "what we expect to see in nature," and "what we do *not* expect to see."

Avoiding, then, these verbal fallacies, let us consider with what various *prepossessions* the study of the Gospel records is usually approached. On each side of the controversy we find a reasonable prepossession pushed too often to an unreasonable extreme. The

¹ *Contra Faustum*, xxvi. 3. On this passage see (for instance) Archbishop Trench in the preface to his treatise *On the Miracles*, as an example of modern orthodoxy enforcing St. Augustine's view.

Christian begins by saying: "Many facts point to the existence of a beneficent Ruler of the Universe. If there be such a Ruler, it is probable that he would wish to make some revelation of himself; and such a revelation would probably be accompanied with unusual phenomena." This may well be thought reasonable; but it is not reasonable to go on to affirm: "This revelation is in fact contained solely in a certain set of men, called the Church, or a certain set of books, called the Bible; these teach absolute truth, and all *soi-disant* revelations elsewhere are absolutely untrustworthy." There is no basis admissible by historical science on which such assertions as these can rest.

On the other hand, the *savant* begins by saying: "Unusual events, alleged to have happened in uncritical times, and not observed to recur in critical and scientific times, are unworthy of credence." This may well be thought reasonable; but it is not reasonable to go on to affirm: "Alleged phenomena, which cannot be repeated at pleasure, nor explained by the known laws of nature, must be referred to illusion or imposture." There is no scientific basis on which such an assertion as this can rest. For our knowledge of the laws of nature is in its infancy; many observed phenomena are admittedly as yet inexplicable, and among explicable phenomena there are a countless number which we cannot repeat at will.

Dismissing, then, the extravagances of either side, our position seems to be this. It is not unreasonable

to suppose that such a life and work as Christ's upon earth was accompanied by some abnormal phenomena. But the age in which these occurred, if they did occur, was so uncritical, and the accounts which have reached us are so surprising, that we are bound to suspend our acceptance of the wonders until some confirmatory evidence can be adduced from later times as to the possibility of such occurrences. And we find that substantially this is the position of the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, which corroborate evangelical by ecclesiastical miracles, alleged by Rome especially to have continued in unbroken series down to the present day. Protestants, disgusted by the fraud and folly which they discern in connection with some of these ecclesiastical miracles, reject them *in toto*, but since the evidence for some among them is, according to ordinary historical canons, much stronger than for some of the *evangelical* ones, the Protestant position is maintained with difficulty against Catholic assaults.

Science, on the other hand, classes all such abnormal events, whether recorded in the Gospels, in the "Acta Sanctorum," or elsewhere, in the same category of error. She points to the fact that the tendency to credit them diminishes with the spread of enlightenment, and she shows a marked reluctance to enter on their discussion in detail. It is easy to see that this reluctance is natural, and up to a certain point salutary, but also that there are transient circumstances in the position of science which dispose her at present to

push to an unphilosophical extent her aversion to such forms of inquiry. Her reluctance is natural: for the subject is beset with difficulties of a baffling and distasteful kind. The observer, like Franklin waiting for his thunderstorms, must catch his abnormal phenomena when and where he can. Like an ethnologist classifying savage religions on the strength of the reports of traders or of missionaries, he must often depend on the accounts of witnesses who are wholly unaccustomed to observe, or who are accustomed to observe in precisely the wrong way. Like the registrar of hysterical cases, he will have to extract his history of symptoms from persons whose whole energies are devoted to deceiving him. He will be tempted to pronounce Simon Magus the only wonder-worker who has left successors, and to retire in disgust from the task of discriminating the shades of fraud and systematising the stages of folly.

These causes of scientific repulsion, moreover, are reinforced (as above intimated) by another, which belongs to a less philosophical side of the *savant's* nature. Science, like all strong forces which have been too long repressed and are now asserting themselves in triumph, must necessarily be at first intolerant of the power which persecuted her. In the disdainful dismissal of all such evidence in favour (for instance) of apparitions after death as might be supposed to hang together in some sense with the Gospel narrative, there is more to be seen than a mere cool scientific scepticism. There is a requital of decaying tyranny with

strengthening scorn ; there is a tacit rejoinder to the sentence on Galileo.

But from whatever source it has arisen, this reluctance of science to examine into these alleged abnormalities has probably been thus far of advantage to mankind. It was primarily essential that the idea of unvarying law should get possession of men's minds ; that Malebranche's doctrine, "Dieu n'agit pas par des volontés particulières," should descend from the lecture-room into the street. And in order to establish or to popularise a great generalisation it may be desirable to keep out of sight for a time some few apparent exceptions, which will be better dealt with when the general principles of the subject shall have become familiar and easy to handle.

It may be said, I think, that this is now the case with the doctrine of the fixity of natural laws. That this doctrine has fairly taken possession of the public mind is proved—and it is the only thing which is proved—by the rapid decline in the general belief in the reality of such phenomena as have been popularly held to be violations of law, to be *miracles*. In times when miracles were thought to be probable things, abnormalities were readily credited, and set down as miraculous. But now that miracles are looked on as impossible things, abnormalities, if they occur, will find no disposition in the popular mind to accept them in spite of their abnormality. The report of them will die away in its battle with the resisting medium,—the

belief that Nature is uniform, and that her laws are mostly known.

“Phenomena of this kind,” it is sometimes said, “need not now be disproved, for they are disbelieved without formal disproof.” Precisely so; they are disbelieved because they are traditionally supposed to be violations of natural law, and we know now that natural laws are never violated. But this argument has a flaw in it. For until such phenomena are not only disbelieved, but weighed and sifted, we cannot tell whether they are in truth violations of natural law or not.

Moreover, as soon as these abnormalities are conceived as possibly reducible to law, it is seen how unphilosophical it is to mass them all together. When they were looked upon as *violations* of law, there was certainly a kind of absurdity in claiming “moderation” for the Gospel miracles. But if the Gospels be taken as a humanly inaccurate record of unusual but strictly natural phenomena, it is but reasonable to sift these phenomena among themselves. All the causes alleged as working for the distortion of the history may in fact have worked, and may have had their share in shaping the account; and yet there may be a residuum highly important both to science and to religion. Historical criticism shows us that some of these phenomena are supported by better evidence than others. Scientific criticism tells us that some of them come nearer than others to known analogy. The scientific way of deal-

ing with them, then, will be—not to ignore all of them equally—but to begin with those which are most strongly affirmed, and for whose subsequent repetition there is also most evidence, and to examine in detail what that evidence is worth. For instance; none of these wonders are more strongly affirmed than that Christ healed the sick with his touch, and appeared to his disciples after death. Can it be said, or rather *would* it be said, if no professional pedantry intervened, that the action of one human organism on another is thoroughly understood? that the phenomena called hypnotism or mesmerism have been explained? that the physiological doctrine as regards what is styled the influence of mind on body is settled or complete? Can it be said, or rather *would* it be said, if no polemical passion were involved, that the widely-spread accounts of apparitions seen at the moment of death, or soon after death, have been collected and scrutinised as they would have been had the testimony related to any other class of facts? Notoriously they have not been so collected and so weighed. And the reason for this is perhaps to be sought in a want rather than an excess of confidence felt by men of science in the strength of their own central position,—the immutable regularity of the course of Nature. They have shunned all mention of such phenomena from a vague fear that if they were established the spiritual world would be found to be intruding on the material world; that, as they have sometimes naïvely expressed it, “an incal-

culable element would be introduced which would interfere with the certainty of all experiments." The scientific answer to this of course is, that whatever worlds, whatever phenomena exist, are governed by rigid law, and that all elements in all problems are incalculable only till they are calculated. The true disciple of science should desire to bring all regions, however strange and remote, under her sway. They may be productive in ways which he can little imagine. Some of the outlying facts whose production Aristotle tranquilly ascribed to "chance and spontaneity" have proved the corner-stones of later discovery. And the bizarre but obstinately recurring phenomena which thus far have been inadequately attested and incompletely disproved, which have been left as the nucleus of legend and the nidus of *charlatanerie*, may in their turn form the starting-point for wider generalisations, for unexpected confirmations of universal law. A history of primitive Christianity which sets them altogether aside may be the clearest and most consistent history of which existing knowledge admits, but it can only be a *provisional* one. It can hardly be expected, for instance, that the common sense of the public will permanently accept any of the present critical explanations of the alleged appearances of Christ after death. It will not accept the view of Strauss, according to which the "mythopœic faculty" creates a legend without an author and without a beginning; so that when St. Paul says "He was seen of Cephas, then of

the twelve," he is repeating about acquaintances of his own an extraordinary assertion, which was never originated by any definite person on any definite grounds, but which somehow proved so persuasive to the very men who were best able to contradict it that they were willing to suffer death for its truth. Nor will the world be contented with the theory according to which Christ was never really killed at all, but was smuggled by some unknown disciples into the room where the Twelve sat at meat, and then disappeared unaccountably from the historic scene, after crowning a divine life with a bogus resurrection. Nor will men continue to believe—if anybody besides M. Renan believes it now—that the faithful were indeed again and again convinced that their risen Master was standing visibly among them, but thought this because there was an accidental noise, or a puff of air, or even an *étrange miroitement*, an atmospheric effect. An *étrange miroitement*! Paley's *Evidences* is not a subtle book nor a spiritual book. But one wishes that the robust Paley with his "twelve men of known probity" were alive again to deal with hypotheses like this. The Apostles were not so much like a British jury as Paley imagined them. But they were more like a British jury than like a parcel of hysterical monomaniacs.

And if, as we must hold, the common sense of mankind will insist on feeling that the marvels of the New Testament history have as yet neither been explained away nor explained, so also will it assuredly

refuse to concur with the view, often expressed both in the scientific and the theological camps, according to which these marvels are after all unimportant, the spiritual content of the Gospels is everything, and religion and science alike may be glad to get rid of the miracles as soon as possible. According to the cruder view of the Gospel wonders, indeed, this would be reasonable enough. To wish to convert men by magic, to prove theological dogmas by upsetting the sequence of things, this is neither truly religious nor truly scientific. But if these Gospel signs and wonders are considered as indications of laws which embrace, and in a sense unite, the seen and the unseen worlds, then surely it is of immense importance to science that they should occur anywhere, and of immense importance to Christianity that they should occur in connection with the foundation of that faith.

It is indeed true that Christianity—understood in our days, it may perhaps be asserted, more profoundly than ever before—has brought to us inestimable blessings which no possible view of the wonders narrated in the Gospels could now take away. It has given us a conception of the universe which most minds accept as at once the loftiest and the most intelligible to which the spirit of man has attained; it has taught us a temper—the temper as of a child towards an unseen Father—which alone, as we now feel, can bring peace to the heart. It is true, moreover, that the best men of all schools of thought are ever uniting more closely

in the resolve to be practically Christian—to look on the labouring universe with this high affiance, to shape life after this pattern of self-sacrificing love, whatever the universe and life may really be—though the universe be a lonely waste of ether and atoms, and life a momentary consciousness which perishes with the brain's decay. So far will philosophy carry good and wise men. But even the best and the wisest men would prefer to rest their practical philosophy upon a basis of ascertained facts. And for the "hard-headed artisan," "the sceptical inquirer," the myriads of stubborn souls to which Christianity has a message to bring—for such men facts are everything, and philosophy without facts is a sentimental dream. They will never cease to desire actual evidence of another world which may develop the faculties, prolong the affections, redress the injustices of this. And they will feel more and more strongly, as the scientific spirit spreads, that such evidence cannot come to us conclusively, either through lofty ideas generated within our own minds, or through traditions which reach us faintly from an ever-receding Past. Science rests not on intuition, nor on tradition, but on patiently accumulated observations which on a sudden flash into a law.

One of the most interesting of M. Renan's essays¹ treats of the religious future of the civilised world. He indicates therein, with a delicacy which it would be unfair to epitomise, which parts of existing religion are

¹ *L'Avenir Religieux des Sociétés Modernes.*

destined to survive and which to disappear. He predicts on the whole an increase of religious sentiment, expressing itself in a "free Christianity," whose pliant dogmas, selected by each mind as its need may prompt it, will leave room for the development of man's spiritual nature in many different ways. But he allows for the growth of no new element, the foundation of no surer faith. He assumes rather that mankind will resign themselves to the long uncertainty, and will confront at last the eternal problems with scarce an effort for their solution.

Even such was the spirit in which Socrates,—the genuine, the characteristic Socrates, shrewdest of mortal men,—looked out on the various theories of the constitution of the visible universe which he found in favour around him. Convinced of the arbitrariness of the explanations, of the inaccessibility of the phenomena, he insisted that nothing more could be known, or should be inquired, concerning the visible universe save that its substance and operations were august and divine; and he summoned the attention of men to matters where improvement was urgent and knowledge possible, the conduct and the laws of their moral being.

The parallel is an instructive one. For we shall find, perhaps, on examination, that the old philosopher's despair of discovering the truth about the physical world, and the modern *savant's* despair of discovering the truth about the spiritual world, are the reactions against precisely the same form of error on the part

of those who have taken in hand to expound the mysteries of the visible universe or of that which is unseen. For the founders of religions have hitherto dealt in the same way with the invisible world as Thales or Anaximander dealt with the visible. They have attempted to begin at once with the highest generalisations. Starting from the existence of a God, — the highest of all possible truths, and the least capable of being accurately conceived or defined, — they have proceeded downwards to explain or justify his dealings with man. They have assumed that the things which are of most importance to us are therefore the things which we are most likely to be enabled to know. Some inquirers have boldly avowed themselves unable to believe anything inconsistent with their notions of absolute right. Others have accepted with resignation some mysterious message of wrath and doom. But all alike have agreed in disdaining any knowledge of things unseen save such as is of a lofty character, and capable of throwing direct light on the destinies of man.

It is possible that in all this mankind have begun at the wrong end. The analogy of physical discovery, at any rate, suggests that the truths which we learn first are not the highest truths, nor the most attractive truths, nor the truths which most concern ourselves. The chemist begins with the production of fetid gases and not of gold; the physiologist must deal with bone and cartilage before he gets to nerve and brain. The

more interesting to us anything is, the less, and not the more, are we likely to know about it. We must learn first not what we are most eager to learn, but what fits on best to what we know already.

Let us apply this analogy to the spiritual world. Let us consider how along that strange road also we may proceed systematically from the most complex of the things which we have learnt already to the simplest of those which we have yet to learn. And here we must first reflect that although it is possible, indeed, that any number of worlds, or of states of being, may exist, differing from our world or from each other in inconceivable ways, yet the only difference which we can take account of,—the only line of demarcation which science can draw,—is between things which can, or which cannot, be cognised by our existing faculties ; or, to speak more accurately, between things which have become a part of our common knowledge, and things which as yet can only be imagined or supposed ;—though this imagination may indeed sustain the intensest faith and hope. And this line of demarcation is not a permanent and immovable one : experience shows us no broad gulf between the sensible and the super-sensible, the seen and the unseen. On the contrary, it is the continual work of science to render that which is incognisable cognisable, that which is unperceived perceptible, that which is fitfully seen and uncontrollable habitually manifest and controlled. In this process she is constantly

encroaching on the domain of old religions, and bringing things which once seemed so unearthly that they must needs be divine into her ordinary categories of observation and experiment. A subtler ether than ever hung round the windless Olympus is now the subject of differential equations. And man — *κεραυνοῦ κρείσσον' εὐρηκὼς φλόγα* — has tamed for his use and fixed for his illumination the very flash and bolt of Jove. There is no need to multiply instances. Science, while perpetually denying an unseen world, is perpetually revealing it. Meantime we are unavoidably subject to the same illusion as our fathers. We too fancy that a great gulf surrounds our field of vision; there must be void or mystery where we cease to see. Aristotle, having done more than any one before or since to explain the affairs of this planet, relegated his unknowable to the fixed stars. The nature of the stars, he says, is eternal, and the first essences which they represent divine.¹ Our standpoint now is not the same as Aristotle's. But we have no more reason than he had to take our mental horizon for an objective line.

If, then (apart from the inspirations of the individual soul), we are asked in what manner we can hope to obtain definite knowledge about spiritual things, the answer which we shall be forced to give will seem, like the prophet's saying, *Wash in Jordan and be clean*, at once a disappointing platitude and a

¹ *Metaph.* xii. 8.

wild chimera. For we can reply only: In the same way as we have obtained definite knowledge about physical things. The things which we now call sensible or natural we have learnt by following scientific methods up to a certain point. The things which we still call supra-sensible or supernatural we shall learn by following those methods farther still. But while we thus commit ourselves to science with loyal confidence, we shall call on her to assume the tone of an unquestioned monarch rather than of a successful usurper. All phenomena are her undoubted subjects; let her press all into her service, and not ignore or proscribe any because ignorance may have misrepresented them, or theology misused. Let her find her profit where she may, without contempt and without prepossession, in the superstitions of the savage as in the speculations of the sage.

But this has yet to be. And even if, more doggedly persistent herein than M. Renan, we cannot bring ourselves to allow that religious aspiration and emotion are all that can be ours, and that the effort after a systematic knowledge of the unseen world must be abandoned in despair, we may nevertheless feel a strong sympathy with the attitude in which he confronts the deep spiritual unsettlement which divides the modern world.

“ ‘La plus rude des peines,’ he says,¹ ‘par lesquelles

¹ *Études d'Histoire Religieuse* (preface).

l'homme arrivé à la vie réfléchie expie sa position exceptionnelle est sans doute de se voir ainsi isolé de la grande famille religieuse, où sont les meilleures âmes du monde, et de songer que les personnes avec lesquelles il aimerait le mieux être en communion morale doivent forcément le regarder comme pervers. Il faut être bien sûr de soi pour ne point se troubler quand les femmes et les enfants joignent leurs mains pour vous dire, Croyez comme nous ! On se console en songeant que cette scission entre les parties simples et les parties cultivées de l'humanité est une loi fatale de l'état que nous traversons, et qu'il est une région supérieure des âmes élevées, dans laquelle se reconcentrent souvent sans s'en douter, ceux qui s'anathématisent ; cité idéale que contempla le Voyant de l'Apocalypse, où se pressait une foule que nul ne pouvait compter, de toute tribu, de toute nation, de toute langue, proclamant d'une seule voix le symbole dans lequel tous se réunissent : 'Saint, saint, saint, celui qui est, qui a été, et qui sera !''"

Again he says¹ (and the few lines that I quote contain the upshot of almost all his teaching) :—

"Ja'i cru servir la religion en essayant de la transporter dans la région de l'inattaquable, au-delà des dogmes particuliers et des croyances surnaturelles. Si celles-ci viennent à crouler il ne faut pas que la religion croule, et un jour viendra peut-être où ceux qui me reprochent comme un crime cette distinction entre le fond impérissable de la religion et ses formes passagères seront heureux de chercher un refuge contre des attaques brutales derrière l'abri qu'ils ont dédaigné."

Passages of this kind may surely be welcomed even

¹ *Essais de Morale et de Critique* (preface).

by those who feel the fullest confidence in the ultimate victory of a more definite form of faith. They show, at least, the nobler aspect of an age of transition, the real advantage which times of doubt and hesitancy may bring to many men in calling out, as it were, the reserve forces of their nature, in compelling them to confront the great problems and to realise what it is that they hold most dear. One might too often be led to think, by the tone of its defenders, that the Christian religion was a kind of transcendental insurance company; that its object was merely to enable men to enjoy this temporal life without anxiety as to the eternal. But this is not so. The object of all true religion is not the tranquillity, but the life of the spirit; and our modern days have seen this life grow strong and vigorous in regions where it has received no conscious sustenance from an envioning Power. It would be rash to turn aside from fellowship with such men because their language jars on orthodox tradition. "Le blasphème des grands esprits," as M. Renan has said in words that recall the deepest thoughts of Pascal—

"le blasphème des grands esprits est plus agréable à Dieu que la prière intéressée de l'homme vulgaire; car, bien que le blasphème réponde à une vue incomplète des choses, il renferme une part de protestation juste, tandis que l'égoïsme ne contient aucune parcelle de vérité."

I must draw to a conclusion. Yet lest, amid criticism and controversy, I may seem to have rendered

imperfectly the substantive character and lessons of one above whose voice, for width and wisdom, it were hard to place the voice of any living teacher, I must yet find room for two passages which represent him at his best. The first was written at a crisis of private sorrow and public contention, and spoke out, in answer to a swift emergency, the inward habit of his soul.

“‘J’ai vu la mort,’¹ he said, ‘de très-près. J’ai perdu le goût de ces jeux frivoles où l’on peut prendre plaisir quand on n’a pas encore souffert. Les soucis de pygmées, dans lesquels s’use la vie, n’ont plus beaucoup de sens pour moi. J’ai, au contraire, rapporté du seuil de l’infini une foi plus vive que jamais dans la réalité supérieure du monde idéal. C’est lui qui est, et le monde physique qui paraît être. Fort de cette conviction, j’attends l’avenir avec calme. La conscience de bien faire suffit à mon repos, Dieu m’ayant donné pour tout ce qui est étranger à ma vie morale une parfaite indifférence.’”

The last passage which I shall quote is one written in calmness, not in exaltation.² It seems to me to contain thoughts as lofty, in language as clear and noble, as any meditation on these eternal things which our age has known.

“Si la religion n’était que le fruit du calcul naïf par lequel l’homme veut retrouver au delà de la tombe le fruit des placements vertueux qu’il a faits ici-bas l’homme y serait surtout porté dans ses moments d’égoïsme. Or, c’est dans ses meilleurs moments que l’homme est religieux,

¹ *La Chaire d’Hébreu au Collège de France.*

² From *L’Avenir Religieux des Sociétés Modernes.*

c'est quand il est bon qu'il veut que la vertu corresponde à un ordre éternel, c'est quand il contemple les choses d'une manière désintéressée qu'il trouve la mort révoltante et absurde. Disons donc hardiment que la religion est un produit de l'homme normal, que l'homme est le plus dans le vrai quand il est le plus religieux et le plus assuré d'une destinée infinie; mais écartons toute confiance absolue dans les images qui servent à exprimer cette destinée, et croyons seulement que la réalité doit être fort supérieure à ce qu'il est permis au sentiment de désirer et à la fantaisie d'imaginer. On crut que la science allait diminuer le monde. En réalité elle l'a infiniment agrandi. La terre semblable à un disque, le soleil gros comme le Péloponèse, les étoiles roulant à quelques lieues de hauteur sur les rainures d'une voûte solide, un univers fermé, entouré de murailles, cintré comme un coffre, voilà le système du monde le plus splendide que l'on eût pu concevoir. . . . Croyons hardiment que le système du monde moral est de même supérieur à nos symboles. . . . Qui sait si la métaphysique et la théologie du passé ne seront pas à celles que le progrès de la spéculation révélera un jour ce que le cosmos d'Anaximène ou d'Iudicopleustès est au cosmos de Laplace et de Humboldt?"

And now, perhaps, enough indication has been given of the temper in which this subtlest of seekers after God approaches the mystery on whose skirts we dwell. The value of his reflections it must be left in great part for the succeeding age to determine. All that can be claimed for him,—that must be claimed now and ever by honest men for honest men,—is that disagreement should carry with it no detraction; that

there should never be anything but honour paid to the search for truth.

“Things are what they are,” said Bishop Butler, “and their consequences will be what they will be; why, then, should we wish to be deceived?” Εἰς οἶωνος ἄριστος—the one best of omens is that we ourselves be brave and true. “Light! though thou slay us in the light!” is the aspiration of all noble souls. Nor was it in vain that that prayer of Ajax was uttered beside Scamander’s shore. The cloud-veil was withdrawn at his bidding, and light was given indeed; but it was not destruction which it pleased Zeus to send for the sons of the Achæans, but entry into sacred Ilium, and a return to their immemorial home.

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH'S POEMS.

ὁλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν ἐκεῖνα κοίλαν
εἶσιν ὑπὸ χθόνα· οἶδεν μὲν βίου κείνος τελευτάν,
οἶδεν δὲ διόσδοτον ἀρχάν.

EVEN in these days of eager appreciation, of ready eulogy, one living Englishman who may fairly lay claim to the title of poet seems as yet to have received but inadequate recognition. Yet he is of all English poets the one whose position in the world is the most conspicuous and considerable. But Dr. Trench's poems have in no wise depended upon his status as an ecclesiastic; they have appealed to no party in the Church; they have made their way by no organised praise or factitious diffusion, but by slow pervasive contact with earnest and lonely minds. His public has been gradually won, and is gradually increasing; there are many for whom his words have mingled themselves with Tennyson's in hours of bereavement, with Wordsworth's in hours of meditative calm.

For there are many who have found in these poems the fit expression of a spirit by nature mournful, by conviction and courage serene; dwelling, as it were,

beneath the pressure, but in the light, of Eternity ; a spirit stirred, indeed, by romance, and alive to martial adventure, but occupied chiefly with the profounder symbolism and occult significance of the world, and finding its congenial nourishment wheresoever Greek, or Persian, or Arabian, German or Spaniard, Jewish rabbi or mediæval saint, has set wisdom in hidden apologues and has mingled mystery with song ; a spirit whose own utterances come rarely and with effort, and express for the most part only a massive wisdom, a gnomic and sententious calm ; but which under the stimulus of strong poetic sympathy, or of desolating bereavement, or merely of the more closely realised imminence of the unseen, will sometimes become as it were slowly enkindled from within, and for a while find grace and power to mix with those who through the weight and confusion of earthly things have fought upwards into the spiritual universe "their practicable way."

I have mentioned *poetic sympathy* as one of the impulses which have most powerfully stimulated Dr. Trench's powers. The strongest instance of this is the influence of Pindar. And it is strange to reflect how subtle must that connection be between verbal melody and deep-seated emotion which enables not merely the thoughts and imaginations, but the very mood and temper of Pindar on some given day to reproduce themselves with such awakening intensity in the breast of a man so remote in language, nation, and faith: It

is strange to think that when Pindar had written down the words beginning

Τὸν δὲ παμπειθῇ γλυκὺν ἡμιθέουσιν πόθον πρόσδαιεν Ἥρα—

he had made it practically certain that whatever might befall Greece or her gods, in every generation of men who should thereafter be born there should be some at least to whom those words should carry a shock and exaltation hardly to be equalled by any personal delight; to whom they should sound as the very charter of heroism, the trumpet-call of honour and of joy. "Hidden are the keys," to use his own words, of the art which so wrought the fourth Pythian ode as that it should outlast the Parthenon :—

" Seeing it was built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever."

In his *Orpheus and the Sirens* Dr. Trench gives us the peculiar pleasure which is afforded by a poem which is not a translation but a transmutation of some great remembered song; melted afresh in the crucible of an understanding heart, and poured into a new shape which recalls without imitating the old :—

" High on the poop, with many a godlike peer,
With heroes and with kings, the flower of Greece,
That gathered at his word from far and near,
To snatch the guarded fleece,

" Great Jason stood, nor ever from the soil
The anchor's brazen tooth unfasten'd,

Till, auspicating so his glorious toil,
From golden cup he shed

“ Libations to the gods, to highest Jove,
To Waves, and prospering Winds, to Night and Day,
To all by whom befriended he might prove
A favourable way.”

There is something in this stately opening, in the “ample pinion” of this high and manly strain, which recalls at a distance the sailing glory of the great original:—

ἀρχὸς ἐν πρύμνῃ πατέρ' Οὐρανιδᾶν ἐγχεικέραννον Ζῆνα, καὶ
ὠκυπόρους
κυμάτων ῥιπὰς ἀνέμων τ' ἐκάλει, νύκτας τε καὶ πόντον κελεύθους
ἄματά τ' εὐφρονα καὶ φιλίαν νόστοιο μοῖραν.

But as the poem proceeds Dr. Trench quits the track of Pindar, and describes the encounter of the returning Argonauts with the Sirens in a passage which should be compared with Mr. Morris' beautiful treatment of the same situation in the *Life and Death of Jason*.

“ The winds, suspended by the charm'd song,
Shed treacherous calm about that fatal isle ;
The waves, as though the halcyon o'er its young
Were always brooding, smile ;

“ And every one that listens, presently
Forgetteth home, and wife, and children dear,
All noble enterprise and purpose high,
And turns his pinnace here,—

- "He turns his pinnace, warning taking none
From the plain doom of all that went before,
Whose bones lie bleaching in the wind and sun,
And whiten all the shore.
.
- "The heroes and the kings, the wise, the strong,
That won the fleece with cunning and with might,
They too are taken in the net of song,
Snared in that false delight ;
- "Till ever loathlier seemed all toil to be,
And that small space they yet must travel o'er
Stretched, an immeasurable breadth of sea,
Their fainting hearts before.
- " 'Let us turn hitherward our bark,' they cried,
'And, bathed in blisses of this happy isle,
Past toil forgetting and to come, abide
In joyfulness awhile ;
- " 'And then, refreshed, our tasks resume again,
If other tasks we yet are bound unto,
Combing the hoary tresses of the main
With sharp swift keel anew.' "

They are on the point of yielding to the charm when
Orpheus sings :—

- "He singing (for mere words were now in vain,
That melody so led all souls at will),
Singing he played, and matched that earthborn strain
With music sweeter still.
- "Of holier joy he sang, more true delight,
In other happier isles for them reserved,

Who, faithful here, from constancy and right
And truth have never swerved ;

“ How evermore the tempered ocean gales
Breathe round those hidden islands of the blest,
Steeped in the glory spread, when daylight fails
Far in the sacred West ;

“ How unto them, beyond our mortal night,
Shines evermore in strength the golden day ;
And meadows with purpureal roses bright
Bloom round their feet alway ;

“ And plants of gold—some burn beneath the sea,
And some, for garlands apt, the land doth bear,
And lacks not many an incense-breathing tree,
Enriching all that air.

“ Nor need is more, with sullen strength of hand,
To vex the stubborn earth, or plough the main :
They dwell apart, a calm heroic band,
Not tasting toil or pain.

“ Nor sang he only of unfading bowers,
Where they a tearless, painless age fulfil,
In fields Elysian spending blissful hours,
Remote from every ill ;

“ But of pure gladness found in temperance high,
In duty owned, and revered with awe,
Of man’s true freedom, that may only lie
In servitude to law ;

“ And how ’twas given through virtue to aspire
To golden seats in ever-calm abodes ;—
Of mortal men admitted to the choir
Of high immortal Gods.”

It will be seen that Pindar's second Olympian Ode has furnished much of the inspiration of these noble stanzas. And it is a noticeable fact that Dr. Trench, himself the very type and norm of Christian and Anglican orthodoxy, has yet by the intensity of his pondering on the things unseen been led to feel the profound affinity which has existed between the hopes and creeds of such men in all times and countries as have set themselves to seek after God, and has thus been upheld in one of his highest moments by the Vision of the Pindaric Apocalypse, the tale told in the Mysteries of the blessedness of the just, *κείναν παρὰ διαίταν*, "in the life that is to be." The *Poems from Eastern Sources* afford many illustrations of this tendency of an inward and meditative faith to identify itself with the diverse but convergent imaginations of remote and ancient men. And in the *Monk and Bird* we may see how strongly this brooding spirit has been drawn towards that element in European life which has most resembled the monotony of the East,—the life of monks and hermits in the middle ages,—a life closed about with narrowing cloister-walls, yet having as it were a single opening on the infinite, like the chink which serves for the astronomer's outlook upon the abysses of heaven.

In the *Monk and Bird* Dr. Trench has treated one of the profoundest of mediæval parables,—an apologue which deals with a real difficulty and suggests a real, though not a novel, solution. The difficulty lies in

conceiving that our finite faculties can be capable without weariness of infinite delight; the answer is the Platonic one, that the limitations of our faculties can even now by an occasional insight be discerned to be accidental and temporary, and not inherent in the percipient soul itself. Such insight, as Plato has urged, comes to us mainly through the passion of Love, which in its highest form refuses to conceive of its own satisfaction in less than infinite time. The author of this legend, if such legends have an author, has chosen a simpler experience through which to intimate the spirit's essential power, and has imagined his Paradise in the unwonted prolongation of a single and elementary joy.

The story is of "a cloistered solitary man," vowed to poverty and celibacy, and debarred from the ordinary interests and pleasures of mankind.

"Yet we should err to deem that he was left
To bear alone our being's lonely weight,
Or that his soul was vacant and bereft
Of pomp and inward state.

"Morn, when before the sun his orb unshrouds,
Swift as a beacon torch the light has sped,
Kindling the dusky summits of the clouds
Each to a fiery red ;—

"The slanted columns of the noon-day light,
Let down into the bosom of the hills,
Or sunset, that with golden vapour bright
The purple mountains fills,—

“These made him say : ‘If God has so arrayed
A fading world that quickly passes by,
Such rich provision of delight has made
For every human eye,

“ ‘What shall the eyes that wait for Him survey,
Where His own presence gloriously appears
In worlds that were not founded for a day,
But for eternal years ?’ ”

But gradually a spiritual anxiety undermined this
spiritual calm :—

“For still the doubt came back, ‘Can God provide
For the large heart of man what shall not pall,
Nor thro’ eternal ages’ endless tide
On tired spirits fall ?

“ ‘Here but one look toward heaven will oft repress
The crushing weight of undelightful care ;
But what were there beyond, if weariness
Should ever enter there ?’ ”

How in this mood of mind he wanders in the woods,
how he hears a bird singing and listens with rapt
attention, and turns homeward with a dim sense of
strangeness when the song is done, I must leave the
reader to learn from the poem itself. I can only
quote the concluding stanzas :—

“Yet was it long ere he received the whole
Of that strange wonder—how, while he had stood
Lost in deep gladness of his inmost soul
Far hidden in that wood,

“ Three generations had gone down unseen
Under the thin partition that is spread—
The thin partition of thin earth—between
The living and the dead.

“ Nor did he many days to earth belong,
For like a pent-up stream, released again,
The years arrested by the strength of song
Came down on him amain ;

“ Sudden as a dissolving thaw in spring ;
Gentle as when upon the first warm day
Which sunny April in its train may bring
The snow melts all away.

“ They placed him in his former cell, and there
Watched him departing ; what few words he said
Were of calm peace and gladness, with one care
Mingled—one only dread—

“ Lest an eternity should not suffice
To take the measure and the breadth and height
Of what there is reserved in Paradise—
Its ever-new delight.”

These stanzas will give an idea of Dr. Trench's characteristic style ; equally remote from convention and from extravagance, keeping as it were in the main track of the English language, and giving to simple and natural forms of speech a grave distinction and a melodious power.

From the poems which derive their motive from external sources I pass on to the more purely subjec-

tive pieces. The keynote of these is given in two weighty stanzas :—

“ O life, O death, O world, O time,
O grave, where all things flow,
’Tis yours to make our lot sublime
With your great weight of woe.

“ Though sharpest anguish hearts may wring,
Though bosoms torn may be,
Yet suffering is a holy thing ;
Without it what were we ? ”

Elevation through sorrow is as distinctly the lesson which Dr. Trench has to teach as elevation through spiritual oneness with Nature is Wordsworth’s lesson. And the sorrow with which this poet deals, which he so wholly vanquishes in the triumphant joy of the lines which he has called “ The kingdom of God,” is not merely such isolated grief as may fall upon an alert and buoyant spirit, to be shaken off with a quick rush of hope, or with the life-bringing recurrence of the years. Rather it is that inbred and heavy gloom, that sense of oppression and of exile, of punishment and fall, which may be said to form the darker side of our “ intimations of immortality,” and which has made the lives, not of monks or recluses only, but of some of the best and most active men whose fates history records, one long struggle between the indomitable effort of courage and the paralysing relapse of pain. The *Ode to Sleep*, of which I quote the two last

stanzas, will illustrate this temper of mind ; and will show that the confident and deliberate hope which is the sum and outcome of this volume is something more than the easy optimism of temperament or convention.

“ And therefore am I seeking to entwine
A coronal of poppies for my head,
Or wreathe it with a wreath engarlanded
By Lethe’s slumberous waters. Oh ! that mine
Were some dim chamber turning to the north,
With latticed casement, bedded deep in leaves,
That opening with sweet murmur might look forth
On quiet fields from broad o’erhanging eaves,
And ever when the Spring her garland weaves
Were darkened with encroaching ivy-trail
And jagged vine-leaves’ shade ;
And all its pavement starred with blossoms pale
Of jasmine, when the wind’s least stir was made ;
Where the sunbeam were verdurous-cool, before
It wound into that quiet nook, to paint
With interspace of light and colour faint
That tessellated floor.

“ How pleasant were it there in dim recess,
In some close-curtained haunt of quietness,
To hear no tones of human pain or care,
Our own or others’, little heeding there
If morn or noon or night
Pursued their weary flight,
But musing what an easy thing it were
To mix our opiates in a larger cup,
And drink, and not perceive

Sleep deepening lead his truer kinsman up,
Like undistinguished Night darkening the skirts of Eve."

Surely there can be no question as to the profound charm of these lines, the charm of the slowly-falling syllables, the strong and lingering rhythm, which paint the gradual eclipse of the last faint joy in light and form and colour, and the whole soul's abeyance in an unstirred and unawakening gloom.

One more quotation shall illustrate the contrasting form of self-abandonment; a dissolution which is not into the night but into the day; the last renunciation of egoism, the absorption of individual effort and rebellion in the Infinite Home of men.

"If there had anywhere appeared in space
Another place of refuge, where to flee,
Our souls had taken refuge in that place,
And not with Thee.

"For we against creation's bars had beat
Like prisoned eagles, through great worlds had sought
Though but a foot of ground to plant our feet
Where Thou wert not.

"And only when we found in earth and air,
In heaven or hell, that such might nowhere be,—
That we could not flee from Thee anywhere,—
We fled to Thee."

But it is by his Elegiac Poems that Dr. Trench has won his almost unique position in many hearts. For it is the especial privilege of Poetry that by her

close intermingling of ethical and artistic sentiment she can bring definite consolation to some of the deepest sorrows of men. Painting can fill our minds with ennobling images, but in the hour of our tribulation these are apt to look coldly at us, like dead gods. Music can exalt us into an unearthly and illimitable world, but the treasures which we have grasped there melt away when we descend from that remote empyrean. Poetry can meet our sorrows face to face, can show us that she also knows them, and can transform them into "something rich and strange" by the suggestive magic of her song. And since there does without doubt exist a kind of transference and metastasis of the emotions, since the force of any strong feeling can to some extent be led off into other channels, the work of Art in the moral world, like the work of Science in the material world, is to transform the painful into the useful, the lower into the higher forms of force; to change scorn and anger into a generous fervency, and love that is mixed with sorrow into a sacred and impersonal flame. And of all sorrows the sorrow of bereavement needs this aid the most. For to some troubles a man may become indifferent by philosophy, and from some he may become through virtue free, but this one sorrow grows deeper as the character rises and the heart expands; and an object more unique and loveable is mourned with a more inconsolable desire. And to such mourners those who trust in an ultimate reunion may often

speak with an effective power. For on whatever evidence or revelation men may base this faith for themselves, it does yet unconsciously in great part rest for each man upon the faith of those around him, upon the desire of great hearts and the consenting expectation of the just. It is a belief which only in a certain moral atmosphere finds strength to grow; it is chiefly when the conviction of spiritual progress through sorrow is dominant and clear that men are irresistibly led to believe that in this crowning sorrow also courage must conquer, and constancy must be rewarded, and love which as yet has known no bar or limit shall find no limit in the grave. Be this persuasion well founded or not, to those "who have intelligence of love" human life without such hope would be itself a chaos or a hell. A nature like Dr. Trench's, full of clinging affections, profound religious faith, and constitutional sadness, was likely to feel in extreme measure both these bereavements and these consolations. The loss of beloved children taught him the lessons of sorrow and of hope, and the words in which that sorrow and that hope found utterance have led many a mourner in his most desolate hour to feel that this grave writer is his closest and most consoling friend.

For although these poems deal so largely with the poet's sorrow and yearning, it is not compassion only, nor compassion chiefly, which they inspire in our hearts. Rather we feel that for one whose hopes are

based so firmly and raised so high we can desire nothing but what he already possesses ; no "treasures," no "friends," as another poet has told us, except such treasures as are his indefeasibly, and those

"Three firm friends, more sure than Day or Night,
Himself, his Maker, and the Angel Death."

GEORGE ELIOT.

“Homo homini deus est, si suum officium sciat.”—CÆCILIUS.

It is no easy task to write for the public eye an account of a deeply-venerated friend whom death has newly taken. It is a task on which one might well shrink from entering, save at the wish of those whose desire in such a matter carries the force of a command. He who makes the attempt can scarcely avoid two opposite perils. Strangers will be apt to think his admiration excessive. Friends more intimate than himself, on the other hand, will find a disappointing incompleteness in any estimate formed by one less close than they,—one who, seeing only what his own nature allowed him to see, must needs leave so much unseen, untold. Between these conflicting dangers the only tenable course is one of absolute candour. To fail in candour, indeed, would be to fail in respect. “Obedience is the courtesy due to kings,” and to the sovereigns of the world of mind the courtesy due is truth.

The world has already been made acquainted with

most of the external facts of George Eliot's life. Mary Ann Evans, youngest child of Robert Evans, land agent, was born at Arbury, near Nuneaton, in Warwickshire, on November 22, 1820. Her birthplace was thus only some twenty miles from Shakspeare's, and the "rookery elms" of her childish memories, survivors of the Forest of Arden, may have cast their shadow also on the poet of *Jaques* and *Rosalind*. Arbury Hall, the seat of Sir Roger Newdigate, her father's principal employer, is reproduced as the Cheverel Manor of *Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story*. So, also, does Chilvers Coton Church appear as Shepperton, Astley Church—*The Lanthorn of Arden*—as Knebley, and Nuneaton as Milby, while many of the inhabitants of that quiet region are painted in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, as they were, or as they might have been.

Her education was mainly self-acquired. For a short time—before she was ten years old—she was at school in Nuneaton, afterwards at the Miss Franklins' in Coventry. "I began at sixteen," she says, in a letter which lies before me, "to be acquainted with the unspeakable grief of a last parting, in the death of my mother." After this loss, and the marriage of her brothers and sisters, she lived alone with her father, and in 1841 they removed from Griff House to Foleshill, near Coventry.

During all these early years, as, indeed, during all the years which followed them, religious and moral ponderings made the basis of George Eliot's life. To

her, as to most of the more serious spirits of her generation, religion came first after the Evangelical — for a time even after the Calvinistic — pattern. The figure of Dinah Morris is partially taken from her aunt, Elizabeth Evans, whose simple goodness had much attraction for the earnest, self-questioning girl. And in other well-known characters she has shown her deep realisation of those forms of faith and piety which rest, not on outward ceremonies, but on the direct communion of the heart with God. The story of the spiritual growth of Maggie Tulliver—in great part, no doubt, autobiographical — has been felt by many readers to be almost unique in its delineation of passionate search, of an eager, self-renouncing soul. But there are those who seek and cannot find, who knock and to whom it is not opened. There are those, the very intensity of whose gaze seems to dim the great hope on which it rests; who, while the kingdom of heaven fulfils itself within them, cease to discern it before them and afar.

Such was the case with George Eliot. After a few years spent at Foleshill in close study, aided by the Charles Brays and other intelligent friends at Coventry, we find her coming first before the world, though anonymously, in 1846, with a translation of Strauss' *Life of Jesus*. This was followed by a translation of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, and a translation, as yet unpublished, of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Her mind had taken its ply, and while her nature, eminently

constant and conservative, retained always a deep reverence and affection for whatever names itself by the name of Christ, she never sought again the old means of grace, nor felt the old hope of glory.

Her father died in 1849, and for some time before his death she was mainly absorbed in attendance on him. She told me once that for the last year of his life she had read Scott's novels aloud to him for many hours almost daily; and thus, we may suppose, amid her severer studies, she was imbibing something of the method of one to whom she always looked up as a master. After her father's death she went abroad with the Brays, and remained for some eight months *en pension* near Geneva, and afterwards at M. d'Albert's house in the town. This was to her a time of intense delight in the external world. The shock of bereavement had left her spirit open to those consolations with which Nature is ever ready to soothe a generous pain.

She returned to England in 1850, and in 1851 she became sub-editor of the *Westminster Review*, a periodical which has often been the first to welcome the contributions of writers who have afterwards risen to fame. She lodged with the editor, Dr. Chapman, and his wife, in a large house in the Strand, which was the centre of a literary group, penetrated for the most part with strongly scientific tendencies, and especially with the philosophy of the Comtist school. Among the articles in the *Review* which have since been

pointed out as hers, that on "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness" (Jan. 1857), is especially characteristic and noteworthy.

This course of placid self-culture was interrupted by personal events which increased the perplexity, deepened the significance, of life. A long tragedy unrolled itself before her; her pity, affection, gratitude, were subjected to a strong appeal; a path was chosen over which, amidst much of happiness, a certain shadow hung. It is enough to say here that if ever her intimate history is made more fully known to the world it will be found to contain nothing at variance with her own unselfish teaching; no postponement of principle to passion; no personal happiness based upon others' pain.

In 1854 Mr. and Mrs. Lewes went to Germany, and spent a year mainly at Weimar and Berlin. They saw much of the most intellectual society of Germany, and it was, perhaps, in this stimulating companionship that the earnest student first became strongly conscious of original power. It was, at any rate, soon afterwards that she discovered the means of self-expression by which she was best able to move mankind, in a form of literature whose freedom of plan renders it specially fitted to reflect the complexity of modern life and thought. She preluded with one or two short tales, which indicate that her power was only just ripening. Then *Scenes of Clerical Life* appeared in 1857, *Adam Bede* in 1859, and *The Mill on the Floss* in 1860.

The author's identity was soon discovered under her *nom de plume* of "George Eliot," and the publication of these first books made a sudden change in her life and surroundings. She awoke and found herself famous. From an obscure sub-editor of an unfashionable review, she rose at a bound to the first place among the imaginative prose writers of her time.

Her remaining twenty years of life were such as the spirit conscious of a message to deliver might most desire. Her mind was fed by strenuous and constant study,—scientific, linguistic, literary,—by frequent travel in those historic lands whose air quickens spirit as well as body, and by habitual intercourse with many of the foremost minds of the age. She never had much connection with the political—still less, of course, with the merely fashionable—world, but nearly all who were most eminent in art, science, literature, philanthropy, might be met from time to time at her Sunday afternoon receptions. There were many women, too, drawn often from among very different traditions of thought and belief by the unfeigned goodness which they recognised in Mrs. Lewes' look and speech, and sometimes illumining with some fair young face a *salon* whose grave talk needed the grace which they could bestow. And there was sure to be a considerable admixture of men not as yet famous—probably never to be so—but whom some indication of studies earnestly pursued, of sincere effort for the good of their fellow-men, had recommended to "that

hopeful interest which"—I quote the generous words of a letter which lies before me—"the elder mind, dissatisfied with itself, delights to entertain with regard to the younger, whose years and powers hold a larger measure of unspoiled life."

It was Mr. Lewes who, on these occasions, contributed the cheerful *bonhomie*, the observant readiness, which are necessary for the fusing together of any social group. Mrs. Lewes' manner had a grave simplicity which rose in closer converse into an almost pathetic anxiety to give of her best—to establish a genuine human relation between herself and her interlocutor—to utter words which should remain as an active influence for good in the hearts of those who heard them. To some of her literary admirers this serious tone was distasteful; they were inclined to resent, as many critics in print have resented, the prominence given to moral ideas in a quarter from which they preferred to look merely for intellectual refreshment.

Mrs. Lewes' humour, though fed from a deep perception of the incongruities of human fates, had not, except in intimate moments, any buoyant or contagious quality, and in all her talk,—full of matter and wisdom and exquisitely worded as it was,—there was the same pervading air of strenuous seriousness which was more welcome to those whose object was distinctly to *learn* from her than to those who merely wished to pass an idle and brilliant hour. To her these mixed

receptions were a great effort. Her mind did not move easily from one individuality to another, and when she afterwards thought that she had failed to understand some difficulty which had been laid before her,—had spoken the wrong word to some expectant heart,—she would suffer from almost morbid accesses of self-reproach. Perhaps to no imaginative writer—to no writer, at any rate, of what is commonly called “light literature”—has fame ever presented itself so unmingledly as responsibility. Each step that she gained in popular favour drove her into a more sedulous conscientiousness, — a conscientiousness which probably injured her later books, by the over-elaboration to which it led. Aware of this danger of a too sensitive care, she abstained almost wholly from reading reviews of her works. She had no appetite for indiscriminate eulogy. “Vague praise,” she writes to a friend, “or praise with false notes in its singing, is something to be endured with difficult resignation.” And censure, or criticism which called on her for what she could not give, would, she felt, only serve to embarrass and depress her. In this matter, as in all, Mr. Lewes stood between her and the world without, with the loyal care with which he repaid the priceless benefit which his character drew from hers.

Thus passed a score of years. Then came his sudden death; her heavy sorrow; her faithful effort to preserve for ever the memory which she held so dear. She edited his last book with scrupulous care, and

founded the "George Henry Lewes Studentship" in Physiology ; providing, with a loving minuteness, that his full name should be for ever associated with a wisely-planned scheme for the fostering of his chosen study. And then, beyond expectation, it came about that fate reserved for her yet seven months of a new happiness ; and she reached unawares the term of earthly life in the midst of unslackening intellectual activities, of ever-deepening loves.

Nothing, indeed, was more remarkable in this last period of her life than her intense mental vitality, which failing health did not seem in the least to impair. She possessed in an eminent degree that power which has led to success in so many directions—which is ascribed both to Newton and to Napoleon — of keeping her mind unceasingly at the stretch without conscious fatigue. She would cease to read or to ponder when other duties called her, but never (as it seemed) because she herself felt tired. Even in so complex an effort as a visit to a picture-gallery implies, she could continue for hours at the same pitch of earnest interest, and outweary strong men. Nor was this a mere habit of passive receptivity. In the intervals between her successive compositions her mind was always fusing and combining its fresh stores, and had her life been prolonged, it is probable that she would have produced work at least equal in merit to anything which she had already achieved. I may perhaps be allowed to illustrate what has here been

said by a few words as to the occupations of her last days on earth.

On the Friday night before her death Mrs. Cross witnessed a representation of the "Agamemnon," in Greek, by Oxford undergraduates, and came back fired with the old words, thus heard anew, and planning to read through the Greek dramatists again with her husband. On Saturday she went as usual to the concert of classical music, and there, as it seems, she caught the fatal chill. That evening she played through on the piano much of the music which had been performed in the afternoon; for she was an admirable executant, and rendered especially her favourite Schubert with rare delicacy of touch and feeling. And thus, as her malady deepened, her mind could still respond to the old trains of thought and emotion, till, all unexpectedly to herself and those who loved her, she passed into the state of unconsciousness from which she woke on earth no more.

The story of George Eliot's life, it will be seen, is a simple and unsuggestive one. It is merely the record of the steady development of a strong and serious mind. There is not much in her which we can trace as inherited; not much which we can ascribe to the influence of any unusual circumstances in her journey through life. Yet from her father,—the carpenter who rose to be forester, the forester who rose to be land-agent,—whose modified portrait appears both in Caleb Garth and in Adam Bede,—she derived, no

doubt, that spirit of thoroughness, that disdain of all pretentious or dishonest work, that respect for conscientious effort, however mistaken and clumsy, which were so distinctive of her in later life. And it must also be considered as a most fortunate thing,—more important, perhaps, for a female novelist in England than for an author of any other type,—that the position of her family, while sufficiently comfortable to allow of her being liberally educated, was humble enough to bring her into close and natural contact with the quaint types of rural life,—as much superior in picturesqueness to the *habitués* of literary drawing-rooms as Mrs. Poyser is to Theophrastus Such. At the time when impressions sink deepest, it was among the Tullivers, the Silas Marners, the Bartle Masseys of this world that George Eliot's lot was cast. And thus in the shy and quaint, but affectionate and observant child, grew up the habit of discerning worth and wisdom beneath rugged envelopes, of feeling that "keen experience with pity blent" of which she speaks in one of her poems—

"The pathos exquisite of lovely minds
Hid in harsh forms—not penetrating them
Like fire divine within a common bush
Which glows transfigured by the heavenly guest
So that men put their shoes off; but encaged
Like a sweet child within some thick-walled cell,
Who leaps and fails to hold the window-bars,
But having shown a little dimpled hand.

Is visited thenceforth by tender hearts,
Whose eyes keep watch about the prison walls."

This sympathy with imperfection, this skill in interpreting the signs by which dumb and baffled creatures seek to show their love and need, was at the root of much both of her humour and of her pathos. Her gaze did not invest the world around her with "the light that never was on sea or land," but seeing men and women without idealisation, she still could love them as they were. This gave to her sympathy a peculiar quality which made it less flattering to the recipient, though in one sense of greater value. It was full and penetrating, but it seemed rather to be bestowed on principle, and as to a human being in difficulty or distress, than to be prompted by any such momentary glow as could induce her to forget what she calls

"The twists and cracks in our poor earthenware,
That touch me to more conscious fellowship
(I am not myself the finest Parian)
With my coevals."

She contemplated, indeed, her own powers and character with a gaze of the same impartial scrutiny. Her natural candour of self-judgment had perhaps been fostered by the tardiness of her success, which had worked in her the best effect which long obscurity can produce on strong and humble natures. It had accustomed her to conceive of herself as of one who

must still strive, who sees his work before him, whose ideal is not yet attained. And it was noticeable that in any casual allusion to her own faulty tendencies she seemed to have felt less need to guard against those which go with success than against those which go with failure.

Mr. Lewes and she were one day good-humouredly recounting the mistaken effusiveness of a too-sympathising friend, who insisted on assuming that Mr. Casaubon was a portrait of Mr. Lewes, and on condoling with the sad experience which had taught the gifted authoress of *Middlemarch* to depict that gloomy man. And there was indeed something ludicrous in the contrast between the dreary pedant of the novel and the gay self-content of the living *savant* who stood acting his vivid anecdotes before our eyes. "But from whom, then," said a friend, turning to Mrs. Lewes, "did you draw Casaubon?" With a humorous solemnity, which was quite in earnest, nevertheless, she pointed to her own heart. She went on to say—and this one could well believe—that there was one other character—that of Rosamond Vincy—which she had found it hard to sustain; such complacency of egoism being alien to her own habits of mind. But she laid no claim to any such natural magnanimity as could avert Casaubon's temptations of jealous vanity, of bitter resentment. No trace of these faults was ever manifest in her conversation. But much of her moral weight was derived from the impression which

her friends received that she had not been by any means without her full share of faulty tendencies to begin with, but that she had upbuilt with strenuous pains a resolute virtue,—what Plato calls *an iron sense of truth and right*,—to which others, also, however faulty, by effort might attain.

A few months since there were still living in England three prophets: for by what other name, as distinguished from our poets and statesmen, can we so fitly call them? Two have passed away; the third still lives to complete his mission. Carlyle's was the most awakening personality. To Ruskin is given the most of revelation. But for the lessons most imperatively needed by the mass of men, the lessons of deliberate kindness, of careful truth, of unwavering endeavour,—for these plain themes one could not ask a more convincing teacher than she whom we are commemorating now. Everything in her aspect and presence was in keeping with the bent of her soul. The deeply-lined face, the too marked and massive features, were united with an air of delicate refinement, which in one way was the more impressive because it seemed to proceed so entirely from within. Nay, the inward beauty would sometimes quite transform the external harshness; there would be moments when the thin hands that entwined themselves in their eagerness, the earnest figure that bowed forward to speak and hear, the deep gaze moving from one face to another with a grave appeal,—all these seemed the

transparent symbols that showed the presence of a wise, benignant soul. But it was the voice which best revealed her;—a voice whose subdued intensity and tremulous richness seemed to environ her uttered words with the mystery of a world of feeling that must remain untold. “Speech,” says her Don Silva to Fedalma, in *The Spanish Gypsy*,

“Speech is but broken light upon the depth
Of the unspoken : even your loved words
Float in the larger meaning of your voice
As something dimmer.”

And then again, when in moments of more intimate converse some current of emotion would set strongly through her soul, when she would raise her head in unconscious absorption and look out into the unseen, her expression was not one to be soon forgotten. It had not, indeed, the serene felicity of souls to whose child-like confidence all heaven and earth are fair. Rather it was the look (if I may use a Platonic phrase) of a strenuous Demiurge, of a soul on which high tasks are laid, and which finds in their accomplishment its only imagination of joy.

“It was her thought she saw : the presence fair
Of unachieved achievement, the high task,
The mighty unborn spirit that doth ask
With irresistible cry for blood and breath
Till feeding its great life we sink in death.”

I do not wish to exaggerate. The subject of these

pages would not tolerate any words which seemed to present her as an ideal type. For, as her aspect had greatness but not beauty, so, too, her spirit had moral dignity but not saintly holiness. A loftier potency may sometimes have been given to some highly-favoured woman in whom the graces of heaven and earth have met; moving through all life's seasons with a majesty which can feel no decay; affording by her very presence and benediction an earnest of the supernal world. And so, too, on that thought-worn brow there was visible the authority of sorrow, but scarcely its consecration. A deeper pathos may sometimes have breathed from the unconscious heroism of some child-like soul.

It is perhaps by thus dwelling on the last touches which this high nature was dimly felt to lack—some aroma of hope, some felicity of virtue—that we can best recognise the greatness of her actual achievement, of her practical working-out of the fundamental dogma of the so-called Religion of Humanity—the expansion, namely, of the sense of human fellowship into an impulse strong enough to compel us to live for others, even though it be beneath the on-coming shadow of an endless night. For she held that there was so little chance of man's immortality that it was a grievous error to flatter him with such a belief; a grievous error at least to distract him by promises of future recompense from the urgent and obvious motives of well-doing,—our love and pity for our fellowmen.

She repelled "that impiety toward the present and the visible, which flies for its motives, its sanctities, and its religion to the remote, the vague, and the unknown," as contrasted with "that genuine love which cherishes things in proportion to their nearness, and feels its reverence grow in proportion to the intimacy of its knowledge." These words are from the essay on "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness," which has been alluded to, and which contains a forcible condemnation of the view—advanced by the poet Young in its utmost crudity—according to which the reason for virtue is simply the prospect of being rewarded for it hereafter. So far as moral action is dependent on that belief, so far, she urges, "the emotion which prompts it is not truly moral—is still in the stage of egoism, and has not yet attained the higher development of sympathy." And she adds to this a moving argument, which in after life was often on her lips and in her heart. "It is conceivable," she says, "that in some minds the deep pathos lying in the thought of human mortality—that we are here for a little while and then vanish away, that this earthly life is all that is given to our loved ones and to our many suffering fellowmen—lies nearer the fountains of moral emotion than the conception of extended existence."

It was, indeed, above all things, this sadness with which she contemplated the lot of dying men which gave to her convictions an air of reality far more impressive than the rhetorical satisfaction which is

sometimes expressed at the prospect of individual annihilation. George Eliot recognised the terrible probability that, for creatures with no future to look to, advance in spirituality may oftenest be but advance in pain; she saw the sombre reasonableness of that grim plan which suggests that the world's life-long struggle might best be ended—not, indeed, by individual desertions, but by the moving off of the whole great army from the field of its unequal war—by the simultaneous suicide of all the race of man. But since this could not be; since that race was a united army only in metaphor—was, in truth, a never-ending host

“ Whose rear lay wrapt in night, while breaking dawn
Roused the broad front, and called the battle on,”

she held that it befits us neither to praise the sum of things nor to rebel in vain, but to take care only that our brothers' lot may be less grievous to them in that we have lived. Even so, to borrow a simile from M. Renan, the emperor who summed up his view of life in the words *Nil expedit*, gave none the less to his legions as his last night's watchword, *Laboremus*.

This stoic lesson she would enforce in tones which covered a wide range of feeling, from the grave exhortation which disdained to appeal to aught save an answering sense of right, to the tender words which offered the blessedness of self-forgetting fellowship as the guerdon won by the mourner's pain.

I remember how, at Cambridge, I walked with her

once in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity, on an evening of rainy May ; and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men,—the words *God, Immortality, Duty*,—pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*. Never, perhaps, have sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and unrecompensing Law. I listened, and night fell ; her grave, majestic countenance turned toward me like a Sibyl's in the gloom ; it was as though she withdrew from my grasp, one by one, the two scrolls of promise, and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates. And when we stood at length and parted, amid that columnar circuit of the forest-trees, beneath the last twilight of starless skies, I seemed to be gazing, like Titus at Jerusalem, on vacant seats and empty halls,—on a sanctuary with no Presence to hallow it, and heaven left lonely of a God.

This was the severer aspect of her teaching. How gentle, how inspiring a tone it could assume when it was called upon to convey not impulse only but consolation, I must quote a few words to show. Writing to a friend who was feeling the first anguish of bereavement, she approaches with tender delicacy the themes with which she would sustain his spirit. "For the first sharp pangs," she says, "there is no comfort ;—whatever goodness may surround us, darkness and

silence still hang about our pain. But slowly the clinging companionship with the dead is linked with our living affections and duties, and we begin to feel our sorrow as a solemn initiation preparing us for that sense of loving, pitying fellowship with the fullest human lot which, I must think, no one who has tasted it will deny to be the chief blessedness of our life. And especially to know what the last parting is seems needful to give the utmost sanctity of tenderness to our relations with each other. It is that above all which gives us new sensibilities to 'the web of human things, Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.' And by that path we come to find for ourselves the truth of the old declaration, that there is a difference between the ease of pleasure and blessedness, or the fullest good possible to us wondrously mixed mortals. . . . All the experience that makes my communion with your grief is summed up in a 'God bless you,' which represents the swelling of my heart now as I write, thinking of you and your sense of what was and is not."

It is on reading words like these that one's thoughts recall the apophthegm of old Cæcilius prefixed as a motto to this paper—

"If each for each be all he can,
A very God is man to man."

Every one of George Eliot's works might be read as a commentary on that text. In each there is a moral crisis, which depends on some strong efflux of the

feeling of human fellowship—sometimes pouring forth unchecked, but with unwonted energy, and sometimes overcoming the counter impulses of egoistic pleasure or pain,—some selfish craving, some angered pride, some wounded and bleeding love. I need not recall each individual instance. Throughout the earlier novels, where there is less of visible purpose and more of mere humorous portraiture than in the later ones, this lesson nevertheless is always recurring. *Romola*, the most laboriously executed of all her works,—the book which, as she said, “she began a young woman and ended an old one,”—is almost from first to last one strain of grave insistence on the human bond. Or consider especially her poems; for these, though often failing in that instinctive melody which is the indispensable birth-gift of poets, are yet the most concentrated expression of herself which she has left behind her. The poems move through more ideal scenes, but they enforce the self-same lesson; they teach that as the mounting spirit becomes more conscious of its own being, it becomes more conscious also of the bonds which unite it to its kin; that thus the higher a man is, the closer he is drawn to the lowest, and greatness is not an exemption, but a debt the more.

The Legend of Jubal is, as it were, the sublimation of all she had to say. It is in that mythic tale that the benefit conferred is most far-reaching, the self-effacement most absolute, the absorption into the universal good most satisfying and sacred.

“ Would’st thou have asked aught else from any god—
Whether with gleaming feet on earth he trod,
Or thundered through the skies—ought else for share
Of mortal good, than in thy soul to bear
The growth of song, and feel the sweet unrest
Of the world’s spring-tide in thy conscious breast ?
No, thou hadst grasped thy lot with all its pain,
Nor loosed it any painless lot to gain
Where music’s voice was silent ; for thy fate
Was human music’s self incorporate :
Thy senses’ keenness and thy passionate strife
Were flesh of *her* flesh and her womb of life.”

Few passages could so completely lift us into the region where Art melts into Virtue ; where they are discerned as twin aspects of the spirit’s unselfish earnestness, which would fain lose itself in a larger joy. The visible Jubal perishes forsaken and alone, but he lives on in the life of Music, his deathless gift to mankind.

In the well-known lines which begin, “ O may I join the choir invisible,” the ardent writer has given voice to her own aspirations. This poem received its fittest commentary when it was read above her grave :

“ May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty.”

To those who knew her these words are her very self
Language has never expressed with more directness
the innermost of a noble soul.

Yet, in this realm of high speculation, to admire is not necessarily to feel complete agreement. There were some to whom these consolations seemed all too shadowy, this resignation premature; some whose impulsion to a personal life beyond the grave was so preoccupying and dominant that they could not readily acquiesce in her negations, nor range themselves unreservedly as the fellow-workers of her brave despair. Those, especially, to whom life's most impressive experience had been the spectacle of some tragedy without an issue, of some unmerited anguish driven in storms upon an innocent soul, — such men might well have scarcely heart enough to work for the future, with thoughts for ever turning to an irredeemable injustice in the past. Rather they would still recur to the ancient hopes of men; they would urge that great discoveries follow on great needs; that problems which have resisted a hundred keys may yield to yet one key more: that in some field of knowledge there may yet be that to know which shall not, indeed, diminish life's effort, but shall establish its felicity, — shall not relax duty but add hope. To one who thus, amid great sorrow, could not abandon this anchor of the soul, she used words some of which I quote, since they may serve to bring her nearer to some minds which may have shrunk at times from the despondency discernible beneath her bravest speech. She wrote:—

“I have no controversy with the faith that cries out and clings from the depths of man's need. I only long, if it

were possible to me, to help in satisfying the need of those who want a reason for living in the absence of what has been called consolatory belief. But all the while I gather a sort of strength from the certainty that there must be limits or negations in my own moral powers and life-experience which may screen from me many possibilities of blessedness for our suffering human nature. The most melancholy thought surely would be that we in our own persons had measured and exhausted the sources of spiritual good. But we know how the poor help the poor."

Those whose own faith is most assured can, I think, "have no controversy" with such a temper as this. The faithful servant, — we may reverently suppose, — will not be met with condemnation because, like her own Fedalma, *she would not count on aught but being faithful*. Nor can it be ours to blame her because, in the presence of solemn issues, she was resolved to keep within the limits of what she did certainly feel and know, and—a sterner Prometheus—at least to omit "vain hopes" from the gifts which she brought to men. She gave us of her best; she gave us all her best; she had no wish, no pleasure, but to give.

"This was thy lot, to feel, create, bestow,
And that immeasurable life to know
From which the fleshly self falls shrivelled, dead;
A seed primeval that has forests bred.

Thy gifts to give was thine of men alone:
'Twas but in giving that thou could'st atone
For too much wealth amid their poverty"

For what she gave to the world the world has not been slow to thank her. But what she gave of private amity ;—of companionship which never knew that it was condescending, of sympathy the more salutary for its sternness, of encouragement which pointed to duty only as the goal :—the thought of these things can come to few without some self-condemning tinge in their regret. Who is there that has drawn from an ennobling friendship all the blessing which he might have won ? Wisdom is everlasting ; early or late we apprehend her still the same. But “ Wisdom herself,” as Plato says, “ we cannot see ;—or terrible had been the loves she had inspired.” And the living forms in which she is in some wise embodied, the eyes through which there looks some parcel of her eternal fire,—these pass suddenly from our sight, and we have hardly recognised them, hardly known. For those who thus lament there is a stern consolation. Let them draw near by faith ; what they missed in presence let them recover by contemplation ; what is wanting to memory let them reserve for hope.¹

¹ See Note B, p. 335.

ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY.

A MAN of many gifts and graces has passed away ; a man so singularly central in English society and amid English schools of thought, so individual and yet so multiform, that among the wreaths which bestrewed his tomb in Henry VII.'s chapel,—the offering of all nations, from Ireland to Armenia, of men of all opinions, from dignitaries of the Church to scientific materialists, of all classes of society, from the Queen of England to the poor children of Westminster,—it would be hard to say which tokens were the most natural, the most appropriate, the most sincere.

A man so many-sided should be described by many men ; a man of such wide and active sympathies should be commemorated not by his intimates alone, but by others who have looked up to him as to a source of life and light ; who have enjoyed, perhaps, some amities of a hereditary friendship, some encouragement of his cordial smile. Without repeating what has been already said, or anticipating what may be more fitly said by others, there is room for some such reflections on his work and character as will be suggested here.

The outward life of Arthur Stanley was so ordered from childhood upward as to enable him to mature and exercise his powers in the most favourable way, and to lead his receptive nature through scene after scene of sterling virtue or of old renown. The happy Rectory-home at Alderley gave to his after years the inestimable background of childish memories of unmingled brightness and peace. His intercourse with Dr. Arnold at Rugby showed the relation of teacher and pupil in its ideal form. At Oxford the three great colleges of Balliol, University, Christ Church, welcomed him in turn, and each upbuilt some part of the fabric of his being. The ancient shrine of Canterbury fostered at once his historic instincts and his deep sense of the greatness of the English Church. And finally Westminster received him to an office so congenial to every aspiration of his heart that all else seemed to have been but a prologue to those stately duties and an antechamber to that famous home. He was blessed, too, in father and mother, in family and friends; blessed most of all in the wife whose presence doubled both his usefulness and his felicity, and whose loss gave to his latest years the crowning dignity of sorrow.

One incongruity alone was sometimes felt in this harmonious career, — a certain discrepancy between Stanley's habits of thought and those of the clerical world around him. Scruples of this kind had led him to hesitate as to taking orders, but they had then been brushed aside with rough vigour by Arnold's friendly

hand. But as Stanley rose into prominence his supposed laxity of dogmatic view gave umbrage to many members of his profession; he experienced "that difficulty" which, in his own words, "is occasioned not so much by the actual divergence of opinion amongst educated, or amongst uneducated men, as by the combination in the same religious and the same social community of different levels of education,"—and it may be added of original temperaments so diverse, that their professors, however educated, must needs construe this perplexing universe in many varying ways. Dean Stanley's view of his own position in the Church is given in a striking passage in the preface to his *Essays on Church and State*:—

"The choice is between absolute individual separation from every conceivable outward form of organisation, and continuance in one or other of those which exist, in the hope of modifying or improving it. There are, doubtless, advantages in the former alternative. The path of a theologian or ecclesiastic, who in any existing system loves truth and seeks charity, is indeed difficult at the best. Many a time would such a one gladly exchange the thankless labour, the bitter taunts, "the law's delay," the "insolence of office," the waste of energy, that belong to the friction of public duties, for the hope of a few tranquil years of independent research or studious leisure, where he need consult no scruples, contend with no prejudices, entangle himself with no party, travel far and wide over the earth, with nothing to check the constant increase of knowledge which such experience alone can fully give. But there is a counterbalancing attraction, which may well

be felt by those who shrink from sacrificing their love of country to a sense of momentary relief, or the hopes of the future to the pressure of the present. To serve a great institution, and by serving it to endeavour to promote within it a vitality which shall secure it as the shelter for such as will have to continue the same struggle after they are gone, is an object for which much may be, and ought to be, endured which otherwise would be intolerable."

This passage is interesting, moreover, as distinctly indicating Stanley's conception of the functions of a National Church. A National Church may be regarded as aiming at either of two somewhat different ends. We may say that it is meant to promulgate that body of spiritual truth which has, at a given historical epoch, approved itself to a given nation. Or we may say that it is meant to promulgate such spiritual truth as may from time to time approve itself to that nation as it lives and grows. On the first theory, the Church must represent a fixed code in the midst of a changing world, as the Greek and Roman Churches profess to do. On the second theory, it must modify its teaching, as the Reformed Churches actually did, when the great mass of thinking men in a nation are seen to have modified their belief. Such changes can have no finality; and if a violent wrench like the English Reformation was justifiable, it must be still more justifiable, in those who now wish to maintain the National Church, to introduce as gently as possible such changes as may keep her in sympathy with the advancing knowledge of the

time. And these changes, though initiated by laymen, must be adopted by Church dignitaries if they are to become a part of the established creed of the nation. It is noticeable, indeed, that in past centuries the same men have often been first denounced as heretics, and afterwards accepted as pillars of the Church, having carried through at their own risk some reform which was ultimately felt by all to be beneficial. It is needless to say that the recent rise of science, physical and historical, has effected an even greater alteration in men's mental outlook than was effected by the revival of learning, which led almost necessarily to the Reformation. If, then, the English Church is to maintain her position as national, she must be prepared to modify her teaching with little delay, and such modification can best be carried through by men of Stanley's comprehensive sympathies and strong common sense.

There remains, however, the question whether religious unity is really strongly desired by many men; whether the different sections of the English Church or the English nation are disposed to make much effort to preserve the idea of a National Church. And the answer commonly given is that such union is *not* strongly desired, that, on the other hand, men tend to hold views more divergent, and to express them with more distinctness, than ever before. It might, perhaps, have been expected that as the conclusions of science become more definite, as it grows easier to make men understand the same demonstrations and

obey the same laws, it would also grow easier to unite them in the same religion. But this is not so; for religion is a matter of tastes and emotions, as well as of reason. Along with what is deepest and most universal its sphere includes all that is most individual and variable in man. It includes points on which classes of men at different mental levels—nay, even different individuals on the same level—cannot possibly be expected to agree. On the one hand, as fresh bodies of men wake up to religion they inevitably pass through stages of thought and feeling which many of their contemporaries have already outgrown. And, on the other hand, learning and intellect, so far from securing uniformity, will, when combined with certain temperaments, only serve to make the cases of reversion to an older type, or of divergence into an individual type, more marked and impressive.

So long, in short, as the evidence as to an unseen world remains much where it is, that evidence will probably be interpreted as variously as heretofore. An accession of new evidence might, no doubt, lead to a greater unity of creed; but the possibility of such an accession of evidence is just what all sects unite to deny.

From the theological point of view, therefore, it may seem neither possible nor very important to maintain the Church of England. On the other hand, the political and the philanthropical arguments for a National Church are strong. It is, or it may be made,

the safest bulwark against sectarian bigotry, the most efficient machinery for supplying the moral needs of the community. And there is also a historical point of view of which Stanley was the best representative. It seemed to him a childish, almost an impious thing, that our disagreements on questions which, for the most part, we can neither solve nor comprehend, should lead us rashly to destroy that august institution which so many names have adorned, so many memories hallowed, which has spread wide arms from pole to pole, and has embodied for centuries the spiritual life of a mighty people. How premature were such a dissolution! For no one knows what direction opinion will ultimately take; and the Church of England, which is committed to so much less than the Church of Rome, and which, with her allied churches in both hemispheres, stands already second in importance to the Church of Rome alone—the Church of England, it may well be said, has a better chance than any other religious corporation of finding herself erect after the general reconstruction, and constituting, in some sense or other, the Church of the Future. Should such a fate be hers, she will be grateful to those whose historical instinct saved her from disruption, who did not despair of the spiritual republic in times of inward conflict and dismay.

Descending from general principles to details we find the peculiar type of Stanley's historical instinct,—his delight in striking anecdote, in unlooked-for paral-

rels, in the picturesqueness of the past,—well illustrated by his treatment, in his latest book, of the rites and symbols of the early Church. To the mystic these symbols seem still instinct with spiritual truth. To the philosopher they suggest a field of unexhausted inquiry; they lead back the mind to the Seven Rivers of the Indus valley, to the worships of our Aryan ancestors in Persia or Babylon, to the remote and essential unity of the creeds of men. Stanley is not attracted in either of these ways. He does not deal with thought and emotion in their subterranean currents, but rather in their dramatic manifestation on the great theatres of the world. And he is never better pleased than when by some quaint juxtaposition he can show the irony of men's pretensions to dogmatic infallibility, or to the authority of immemorial tradition. In *Christian Institutions* it delights him to point out that the only true Sabbatarians are to be found in Abyssinia; that the kiss of peace was "one of the most indispensable of primitive practices," but is now preserved only by "the Glassites, or Sandemanians"; that although the Coptic Church alone retains the original form of the Lord's Supper, some vestige of the true position is retained by the Presbyterians and the Pope. The Pope, in fact, is for Dean Stanley a perfect museum of paradoxes. While reflecting with regret that "Augustine would have condemned him as an unbaptised heretic," he is pleased to find, in the peculiarities which surround him, "a mass of latent Primi-

tive Protestantism." He traces with interest the origin of his white gown, his red shoes, his peacock fans; while he is careful to remind us that the only ecclesiastical vestment recognised by the early Fathers consisted of trousers.

The breadth, and also the limitations of Stanley's view, are well exemplified by his essay on the pictures in the catacombs of Rome. He draws out admirably from these figures the ἀγαλλίασις and ἀφελότης, the joy and simplicity of the primitive Church. There is found there no crucifix, no cypress, no death's-head, no dance of skeletons, no martyrdom of saints, but the young shepherd carrying the lamb amid green pastures, and dove-like souls that soar to heaven, and the mysterious gladness of the vine. All this he sees in that ancient imagery, but he does not attempt to explain its strange anomalies by any reference to a yet remoter past. He has no word of comment (for instance) on the view of those in whose eyes an occult tradition mingles here with the new-risen faith; who see in the *crux ansata*, with its recurved extremities, the cross of wood from whose central hollow our Aryan forefathers made spring the friction-fire; who discern in *Agnus* the mystic *Agni*, and in the lamb's luminous aureole the transmuted symbol of that Vedic flame.

We can, indeed, hardly claim for Stanley the title of an original investigator on any subject, save only the very difficult and interesting one of the geography of Sinai and Palestine. But it would be equally unfair

to speak of such popularisations as his *Jewish Church* as though they were slight or easy productions. Crude knowledge must be digested and re-digested before it can enter vitally into the intellectual system of mankind, and rightly to assimilate such nutriment may often be as difficult as to collect it. The Englishman, especially, writing, as Stanley did, for two hemispheres and some half-dozen nations, must needs feel that the form in which he gives his results to this enormous public is a matter of no slight concern.

Of this Dean Stanley, with his keen interest in America, his vivid sense that "westward the course of empire takes its way," was certain to be fully conscious. And he remembered it most of all when he dealt with that subject whose world-wide diffusion has given to it its chief importance. For the history and literature of England may be said to have had greatness thrust upon them. They have not been selected for universal study on account of their intrinsic interest and perfection, as have been the history and literature of Greece. But they belong to a race which happens to have just those qualities which enable it to overrun the earth. Whatever the history of such a race may be, the world must know it; whatever its literature, the world must study it. And in recounting the English Past no tone could be fitter than Dean Stanley's,—a tone indicating at once a glowing sense of the dignity of the story, and an honest consciousness of its many blots and imperfections. Long

before Stanley was made Dean of Westminster it was felt that the memories which hallow English ground appealed to no man more vividly than to him. And when he was placed, as it were, in official connection with English history,—when he was made the guardian of that pile of buildings which is to the British Empire,—nay, to all English-speaking lands,—almost what the Capitol was to Rome,—then indeed the thought of him became so inseparable from the thought of the Abbey that one knew not whether the man magnified the office, or the office the man.

It is there, in some part of that vast irregular pile, that the memory of all who knew him will choose to imagine him still. Some will best recall him as he dispensed hospitality in the Deanery, or stood in that long library which seems immersed in silence and antiquity within a bow-shot of earth's busiest roar. These will remember his talk, its vivacity and simplicity, its tone as of a man accustomed to feel that his words carried weight, yet never grasping at an undue share in the conversation, nor failing to recognise the least contribution which those who spoke with him might bring. To those who recall such scenes he may well appear as the very type of civilisation, of the manners to which birth and breeding, mind and character, add each their charm; which can show feeling without extravagance, and power without pride; which can convince men by comprehending them, and control with a smile.

To some, again, his image will present itself as he stood in his pulpit in the nave of Westminster, or by the tomb of some great man departed, or before the altar on the rare occasions when the solemn Abbey opened its portals to a scene of marriage joy. These will recall the voice of delicate resonance, the look of force and dignity enhanced by the contrast with a body so small and frail ; and, above all, that efflux of vivid human fellowship which all men felt when he was near, the sense of the responsive presence of a living soul.

He lies where he had most truly lived. Beside him, in the niche of Henry VII.'s chapel, is laid the wife to whom, in his own solemn words, the earthly union was but designed to link him "till death us join" in some bond more sacred still. Above him float the banners of his knightly Order of the Bath, whose ideal chivalry and purity have never found an earthly embodiment more chivalrous or more pure. The chapel opens into the mighty Abbey, solemn and noble as work of men's hands can be, yet filled with tombs and tablets miscellaneous as life, incongruous as history. Many a strange shape is there : Rodney's captains, and Admiral Tyrrell rising from the sea, and the monstrous image of Watt ; but, in the midst still stands the shrine of the Confessor, and the fifth Henry's helm, with the dints of Agincourt, hangs in the dusky air.

It may be that, in ages to come, those who tell the roll of England's worthies in the aisles of Westminster

may think that Stanley's name stood higher with his contemporaries than any definite achievement of his could warrant. We cannot correct the judgments of posterity; but we may feel assured that if it had been allowed us to prolong, from generation to generation, some one man's earthly days, we could hardly have sent any pilgrim across the centuries more wholly welcome than Arthur Stanley to whatever times are yet to be. For they, like us, would have recognised in him a spectator whose vivid interest seemed to give to this world's spectacle an added zest; an influence of such a nature as humanity, howsoever it may be perfected, will only prize the more; a life bound up and incorporated with the advance and weal of men; a presence never to be forgotten, and irreplaceable, and beloved.

A NEW EIRENICON.

SOME sixteen years ago the English-speaking world was startled by a treatise which discussed the well-worn theme of the mission of Christ in a tone of such freshness and originality that it threw into confusion the ranks of established party; and while one great orthodox statesman denounced the book as "vomited from the jaws of hell," another, greater still and equally orthodox, did not disdain to call attention to that same work in a subsidiary volume of his own, full of sympathy, exposition, and eulogy.

The distinguished author of *Ecce Homo*, whose thin veil of anonymity criticism is still bound to respect, has now published a part of the promised sequel to his earlier speculations in a volume which may not, perhaps, prove so widely popular as its predecessor, but which undoubtedly indicates a marked advance in power, and which ought to exercise a strong and salutary influence on the conduct of the great controversies of our day. Yet *Natural Religion* is not (it may be said at once) a book which attempts to deal with the speculative points at issue among the schools or the

churches. Still less does it profess to cast any fresh light on the old problems of *whence* and *whither*, or to supply to morality that independent standing-point for which she still is vainly feeling in the void. The task which it attempts is a lesser one, but great nevertheless, and within the power of man. It is to prove to the earnest but divergent schools of modern thought, to the artist, the Positivist, the man of science, the orthodox Christian, that their agreement lies deeper than their differences, that the enemy of all is the same; that for the most part they are but looking at different sides of the shield, whether they worship the Unity of the Universe by the cold silver light of His power and reality, or in the golden radiance of His love. And thus the author claims for all forms of enthusiastic admiration of truth, beauty, goodness, the title of religion, which he deems theirs by right both of logic and of history, and urges all parties to march side by side, so far at least as they may, in the self-elevating culture which is itself a worship—in the actively beneficent civilisation which is the missionary aspect of the higher life.

The treatise is too full of matter to be easily summarised. Perhaps we may get the clearest idea of our author's position in respect to the various schools around him if we transpose abstract terms into concrete in some homely apologue. Starting, then, from the metaphor which compares religion to "hid treasure," let us compare mankind, with their varied efforts to

grasp the meaning of the world around them, to a body of shareholders originally established as a "General Mining Company," and working a large estate with mixed success. Suddenly a charter is presented to them conferring a title to an enormous gold-mine in Central Africa; the Gospel, to wit, with its promise of eternal life. For a time nothing else is thought of; but gradually the samples of gold sent home are lost, and the validity of the charter, and the real existence of the mine, begin to be disputed. The Company, however, has traded largely on the credit of this gold-field, and when its existence is denied, some shareholders (the Pessimists) urge that the Company is bankrupt, and had better be dissolved as soon as may be. Others (Positivists and Stoics) maintain that the old mines can still be made to give returns sufficient to satisfy reasonable men. And many shareholders do actually continue mining on their own account. But the directors (the rulers of the existing Churches) have already changed the Company's title to that of the "Gold Mining Company of Central Africa," and now stand resolutely on their charter, ignore all operations on their old estates, and prohibit the use of the Company's funds and appliances (Church organisation) in any mining except for gold. They engage in constant law-suits, in which the old testimony as to the value of the samples of gold now lost, and as to the existence of a potentate capable of granting their charter, is thrashed out with little visible progress. Some of the

directors, indeed, assert that they still possess some specimens of ore (the modern Roman Catholic miracles), but these specimens are discredited by other members of the board.

Here our author intervenes. He does not abandon hope in the disputed charter. He even doubts whether the concern can be kept permanently going unless it somehow gets hold of gold. But he reminds the directors that the Company was originally formed for mining of every description before gold was hoped for; for religion, even religion as lofty as Isaiah's, did exist without definite hope of immortality. And he points out the rich results actually obtained by those energetic shareholders who are digging for other metals, who are worshipping God by science, Nature by art, Humanity by civilisation. These men are using the very machinery with which the Company started; the instincts, namely, of unselfish reverence, admiration, fellowship, which seem innate in man. And they are finding (he insists) in unlooked-for abundance the very ores which the Company was first incorporated to supply; for most religions begin as rude attempts to explain and unify the natural phenomena which science now fits with more exactness into that very conception of a unity in Nature, which is the essence both of all science and of all Monotheistic systems. He urges on the directors to recognise and incorporate these independent efforts, and advises the leaders of the opposition not to separate from the Company, but

to get themselves gradually put on its direction, and to utilise its existing rights and good-will for their own purposes, which were comprised, at any rate by implication, in its original scheme of undertakings.

This rude sketch may help to show the drift of arguments which must now be considered rather more in detail. Our author begins by dwelling on the points of similarity between the attitude of science and that of religion towards the secular world. Both sides alike "agree in denouncing that pride of the human intellect which supposes it knows everything, which is not passive enough in the presence of reality, but deceives itself with pompous words instead of things, and with flattering eloquence instead of sober truth." Still more bitter is the contempt which both feel for that torpid conventionalism whose thoughts cannot rise to great generalisations, but are embedded in the petty cares and pleasures of the day. And he maintains that Atheism does not consist in the denial either of the absolute benevolence or of the miraculous interferences of the Being held supreme (since many religions have existed in which these beliefs were absent), nay, nor even in the refusal to acknowledge a personality in that ultimate power; since personality is, after all, a metaphysical conception difficult to define in our own world, and still harder to realise with any distinctness when the imagined personality has no boundary or limit of being. In some respects the God of science

is more omnipresent, more pervading, more mighty, than God has ever yet appeared to men.

“ ‘In Him,’ may the worshipper of this Deity say with intimate conviction, ‘in Him we live and move and have our being.’ When men whose minds are possessed with a thought like this, and whose lives are devoted to such a contemplation, say, ‘As for God, we know nothing of Him; science knows nothing of Him; it is a name belonging to an extinct system of philosophy;’ I think they are playing with words. By what name they call the object of their contemplation is in itself a matter of little importance—whether they say God, or prefer to say Nature, the important thing is that their minds are filled with the sense of a power to all appearance infinite and eternal, a power to which their own being is inseparably connected, in the knowledge of whose ways alone is safety and well-being, in the contemplation of which they find a beatific vision.”

Atheism, then, is not the belief in such a God as this, but the denial of Him; it is to be without a practical belief in the Order of the Universe, to dash one's self wildly against its laws in wilful revolt, or to shut one's self up with cautious feebleness in a paltry and sensual peace. To have a theology, on the other hand, is to know something of the relation in which human life stands to the Universe; of the degree of possibility which the laws of that Universe have accorded to our best ideals. The man who has no ideals, or who believes that the Universe has forbidden their realisation, sinks into baseness or despair; but he whose imagination has assimilated some noble ideal,

whose activity urges him to its realisation, this man has begun to possess not a theology only, but a religion.

“The words religion and worship are commonly and conveniently appropriated to the feelings with which we regard God. But those feelings—love, awe, admiration, which together make up worship—are felt in various combinations for human beings, and even for inanimate objects. It is not exclusively, but only *par excellence*, that religion is directed towards God. When feelings of admiration are very strong they find vent in some act; when they are strong and at the same time serious and permanent, they express themselves in recurring acts, and hence arise ritual, liturgy, and whatever the multitude identifies with religion. But without ritual religion may exist in its elementary state, and this elementary state of religion is what may be described as *habitual and permanent admiration*.”

And, apart from Christianity, this admiration still may be, and still is, directed towards other objects which have made the essence of many of the religions of the past. Some men are returning to a higher Paganism—to the religion of the world's childhood, the worship of natural forms—purified now and rationalised, and capable of elevating such a spirit as Wordsworth's into a sacred and untroubled peace. And some men, approaching Nature from a different side, can hardly tell whether to call themselves Theists or Pantheists, as not knowing whether the Unity which they reverence be immanent in, or distinct from, the sum of things. They worship they know not

what; and yet the word *Nature* is too narrow to formulate the power which such men revere.

“Nature, as the word has hitherto been used by scientific men, excludes the whole domain of human feeling, will, and morality. Nevertheless, in contemplating the relation of the Universe to ourselves and to our destiny, or again in contemplating it as a subject of admiration and worship, the human side of the Universe is the more important side to us. Our destiny is affected by the society in which we live more than by the natural conditions which surround us, and the moral virtues are higher objects of worship than natural beauty and glory. Accordingly the word *Nature* suggests but a part, and the less important part, of the idea for which we are seeking an expression. Nature presents itself to us as a goddess of unweariable vigour and unclouded happiness, but without any trouble or any compunction in her eye, without a conscience or a heart. But God, as the word is used by ancient prophets and modern poets, God, if the word have not lost in our ears some of its meaning through the feebleness of the preachers who have undertaken to interpret it, conveys all this beauty and greatness and glory, and conveys besides whatever more awful forces stir within the human heart, whatever binds men in families, and orders them in states. He is the Inspirer of kings, the Revealer of laws, the Reconciler of nations, the Redeemer of labour, the Queller of tyrants, the Reformer of churches, the Guide of the human race towards an unknown goal.”

But let us ask ourselves what the practical efficacy of a religion like this will be? What front will it be able to offer to secularity? To what extent can it

inspire an active life, an independent virtue? The first instance that suggests itself is not wholly reassuring. The central maxim of this comprehensive faith, the injunction "to live resolutely in the whole, the good, the beautiful," is offered to us by Goethe imbedded in a kind of amorous drinking-song; and although the great German poet may, no doubt, have "felt the whole six days' work go on within him," yet (as our author frankly admits) "morality itself, as it is commonly understood, was not much favoured in his writings, nor perhaps in his life."

To objections of this kind our author replies with an eloquent re-statement of that cardinal truth of morals whose proclamation has given to every moral reformer, from Jesus Christ downwards, something of the air of an antinomian:—the subordination, namely, of works to faith, of letter to spirit, of law to grace.

"According to the view here taken too much is said by modern rationalists of morality, and too little of art and science, since these are related no less closely to religion, and must be taken with morality to make up the higher life. This view, indeed, regards the very word morality, and the way of thinking which leads to a frequent use of the word, with the same sort of impatience which the Pauline writings show towards the law. In any description of an ideal community which might be given in accordance with this view not much stress would be laid on its moral purity. This would rather be taken for granted as the natural result of the healthy working of the higher life. The peculiarity most strongly marked would

be rather that what we call genius would be of ordinary occurrence in such a community. Every one there would be alive. The cares of livelihood would not absorb the mind, taming all impulse, clogging all flight, depressing the spirit with a base anxiety, smothering all social intercourse with languid fatigue, destroying men's interest in each other and making friendship impossible. Every one would worship, that is, every one would have some object of habitual contemplation, which would make life rich and bright to him, and of which he would think and speak with ardour. Every one would have some supreme interest, to which he would be proud to sacrifice every kind of help, and by which he would be bound in the highest kind of friendship to those who shared it. The higher life in all hearts would be a soil out of which many fair growths would spring; morality would be one of these; but it would appear in a form so fresh that no such name would seem appropriate to it."

The inhabitants of this ideal commonwealth, as it appears, would not be inclined to look on morality either as a direct supernatural law, or as the outcome of laborious philosophical inquiry. They would look rather to the religion which underlies morality; to the Natural Christianity which, as the thing in the known universe most manifestly worshipful, chooses the goodness and nobleness of men. "As virtue can only show itself in our relations to our fellowmen, the religion that leads to virtue must be a religion that worships men. If in God Himself we did not believe qualities analogous to the human to exist, the worship of Him would not lead to virtue." And this strenuous

admiration, carrying with it the desire to imitate and to associate with the thing admired, while in private relations it is private virtue, becomes patriotism when it is directed towards a united community of men. It is a common view of the universe, a common ideal of conduct, which collects tribes into nationalities, and ripens nationalities into states. "Religions are commonly what may be called nationalities in an idealised form," an idealisation which is apt to start into controlling reality at the shock of danger, or even in the throes of what might well seem death. Thus it was "by the waters of Babylon that Jewish nationality was transformed into Judaism;" and Rome became the religion of Regulus, and Italy of Mazzini, and Sparta of those who bade the passer-by bear news of how they lay at Thermopylæ "in obedience to her precepts." And as the great nations of the world emerge gradually from their isolation and enmity into the consciousness of a deep community of ideals and aims, so also, says our author, should the Churches broaden too; till the several National Churches, being each of them no narrower than the whole spiritual aspect or content of each individual State, unite and gather in a Church more Catholic than was ever the Roman, even in the Universal Church, which is universal civilisation.

With its united influence this Church will teach to the barbarous races all that the civilised have learnt—science, humanity, delight and confidence in nature.

And to each several nation her National Church will hold up the higher aspect, the inner meaning, the renowned exemplars of her own character and corporate life; demanding of her preachers nothing more than intelligence and sincerity, and shrinking above all things from binding them to fixed historical conceptions which the very march of history itself is certain in some sort to overthrow.

"Suppose," says our author, in one of his most brilliant passages, "suppose we had formulated in the sixteenth century the principles or beliefs which we supposed to lie at the basis of our national Constitution. Suppose we had made a political creed. Perhaps the doctrine of divine right and the power of kings to cure disease, perhaps the whole legend of Brute and the derivation of our State from Troy, would have appeared in this creed. Once formulated, it would have come to be regarded as the dogmatic basis upon which our society rested. Then in time criticism would have begun its work. Philosophy would have set aside divine right, science would have exploded the belief about the king's evil, historical criticism would have shaken the traditionary history, and each innovation would have been regarded as a blow dealt at the Constitution of the country. At last it would have come to be generally thought that the Constitution was undermined, that it had been found unable to bear the light of modern science. Men would begin publicly to renounce it; officials would win great applause by resigning their posts from conscientious doubts about the personality of King Arthur. It would be generally agreed that the honest and manly course was to press the controversy

firmly to a conclusion, to resist all attempts to confuse the issue, and to keep the public steadily to the fundamental points. Has the sovereign, or has he not, a divine right? Can he, or can he not, cure disease by his touch? Was the country, or was it not, colonised by fugitives from Troy? And if at last the public should come by general consent to decide these questions in the negative, then it would be felt that no weak sentiment ought to be listened to, no idle gratitude to the Constitution for having, perhaps, in past times saved the country from Spanish or French invasion; that all such considerations ought sternly to be put aside as irrelevant; that as honest men we are bound to consider, not whether our Constitution was useful or interesting, or the like, but whether it was *true*, and if we could not any longer say, with our hands on our hearts, that it was so, then, in the name of eternal truth, renounce it and bid it farewell!"

Hell certainly could have "vomited from its jaws" few passages better calculated than this to undermine the orthodoxy of established churches. This is the invitation, of which we spoke, to the leaders of reaction against the Christian Church to become the leaders of progress within it; it is the appeal addressed (in the terms of our homely simile) to the shareholders who are mining independently of the Company to try to get elected among its directors. The invitation seems so persuasive that there must be strong arguments on the other side, or the coalition would have been already effected. And in fact we can imagine some plain men among the shareholders who might think that only philosophers or renegades could enter on such an

amalgamation as this. "The advice," they might say, "is precisely such as might have been expected from an eminent counsel who considers our past discussions as mere fruitless folly, and thinks only of what course of conduct will increase the dividends of the Company. But the difference has gone too far. The directors have borrowed too largely on the strength of their gold-field, and are far too sure of it still to be able to unite with men who have pronounced it a sheer illusion. They will not alter their prospectus, in which that famous charter fills the leading place. And if the opposition leaders, with their known views, were to sign that prospectus, it would be the destruction of all confidence among business men."

Nay, even after these projects of practical union have been dismissed as too probably chimerical, there remain two theoretical objections to our author's definition of religion which many men will find it hard to get over. In the first place, can that be called religion which offers nothing of personal, of spiritual intercourse between the soul and God? Our author's reply to this is the hint that personality in an Infinite Being can be little more than a metaphor, that when we are dealing with the eternal, the all-embracing, then indeed,—

"dextrae jungere dextram

Non datur, ac veras audire et reddere voces."

Our spiritual intercourse must lie in the evocation of the memory of our great predecessors, as when we ask

ourselves, would Socrates, would Marcus Aurelius, have approved what I am doing now? .

It is needless to say that the Christian, however undogmatic, will never be satisfied with this. He will never call it religion to keep, like Septimius Severus, a bust of Christ in his private chapel, "along with Virgil, Orpheus, Abraham, and other persons of the same kind." He claims to address himself to a Being made human enough to give our love a place to cling, but remaining divine in His perfection, in His illuminating and responsive power.

Nor is this intense impulse towards a spiritual union with something that is at once above and within us confined to Christians alone, or necessarily associated with any form of traditional belief whatever. For while it may be the fact that the belief in any definite superhuman personality becomes harder to maintain as men's minds become subtler and their scrutiny of evidence more exacting, yet, on the other hand, we see the craving for divine communion, divine forgiveness and blessing, satisfying itself with a spiritual answer which it shrinks from defining, and growing (as in Plotinus) the more absorbing as its object grows more incognisable to man. Not science alone, but mysticism, has shown itself ready to become the heir of all religions; and the churches of Christendom may be destined to dissolve away, not into civilisation only, but into ecstasy.

If, then, man's spiritual nature should not wither

before the growth of his intellectual nature, but grow with it to the end; it is likely that the distinction between philosophy and religion will not be obliterated, and that it will continue to be only by a stretch of language that science, patriotism, culture, can be included under the latter and more sacred name.

And, in the second place, even apart from such speculations as these, there is, for plain men, here and now, an inadequacy in the very idea of natural religion, as defined in this book, which our author has not indeed concealed, to which he has given earnest and forcible expression, but which to minds less philosophic or less hopeful than his own will present itself like the Sphinx's riddle, which palsied all inquiry into things remote or speculative with the urgency of an instant fear.

*ἡ ποικιλφδὸς Σφίγξ τὰ πρὸς ποσὶ σκοπεῖν
μεθέντας ἡμᾶς τὰφανῇ προσήγετο.*

"When the supernatural," says our author, "does not come in to overwhelm the natural and turn life upside down, when it is admitted that religion deals, in the first instance, with the known and the natural, then we may well begin to doubt whether the known and the natural can suffice for human life. No sooner do we try to think so than pessimism raises its head. The more our thoughts widen and deepen, as the universe grows upon us and we become accustomed to boundless space and time, the more petrifying is the contrast of our own insignificance, the more contemptible become the pettiness, shortness, fragility of the individual life. A moral paralysis creeps upon us.

For awhile we comfort ourselves with the notion of self-sacrifice ; we say, What matter if I pass, let me think of others ! But the *other* has become contemptible no less than the self ; all human griefs alike seem little worth assuaging, human happiness too paltry at the best to be worth increasing. The whole moral world is reduced to a point ; the spiritual city, ' the goal of all the saints,' dwindles to the ' least of little stars ' ; good and evil, right and wrong, become infinitesimal, ephemeral matters, while eternity and infinity remain attributes of that only which is outside the sphere of morality. Life becomes more intolerable the more we know and discover, so long as everything widens and deepens except our own duration, and that remains as pitiful as ever. The affections die away in a world where everything great and enduring is cold ; they die of their own conscious feebleness and bootlessness."

This passage falls upon the reader with a shock of disenchantment. " What, then," he exclaims, " did our author mean by so confident, so encouraging a tone ? Has he not been masterfully persuading us that at bottom we are all agreed, and that the inward satisfaction which belongs to the *foi du charbonnier* may somehow be shared also by the severest sage ? And now the hand which raised the fabric dashes it to the ground—the digestive energy which dissolved away so many a stubborn morsel ends by dissolving away the organism itself." Alas ! this book is no exception to the rule which bids the writer of every Theodicy break off his demonstration with some abruptness when he reaches the question whose answer it concerns us

most to know. We may be carried beyond ourselves by our teacher's eloquence and enthusiasm, yet we are always dimly conscious that eloquence and enthusiasm will after all leave us where we were, with everything depending on a single point which neither our teacher nor we have the data to determine.

But here let us make an end of controversy. Whether we call our author's utterances by the name of religion or of philosophy, they contain, at any rate, sublime ideas, vast generalisations, far-reaching hopes. As a mere model of simple and noble style this work is likely to be widely studied and to be remembered long. Nowhere, perhaps, could we find a more signal example of the characteristic excellences of the English prose of the present era, of its mingled subtlety and trenchancy, of its flashes of impassioned feeling seen through an atmosphere of steady self-control. It is instructive to compare our author's style with M. Renan's. The Frenchman seems like the very spirit of the age whispering in our ear. We gradually get to think all other voices partial or foolish, and though we may never once feel in cordial agreement with him, we end by admitting to ourselves that we cannot get nearer to the truth than he. The Englishman, on the other hand, does not shrink from startling, almost offending us. His arguments often seem one-sided, his aims impracticable. But even his paradoxes have a kind of combative cogency, and when some veritable truth "swims into his ken," then, indeed, he

speaks like a captain calling to the onset, and declares in tones of trumpet clearness the chief concerns of man.

And whatever may be the event and upshot of our present perplexities, there must at any rate be need of this spirit of earnest catholicity which strives to raise all the elements of our spiritual being to a heat so glowing that they may fuse and combine themselves in one. If we are always to remain uncertain as to any life save that of earth, then it will be to these eager and dominating spirits that we shall have to look for much of the impulse that is to keep us from stagnating in despair. And even if some clearer conviction of immortality be yet reserved for men, such exhortations as these should keep us from the complacent quietism which thinks that it is enough to be "saved." They should remind us that the Natural Religion of this life may continue to be the Natural Religion of another, and that "the Eternal and the Infinite and the All-embracing" may need to be approached by many pathways which priestly tradition has never known.

And surely the more we are persuaded that a belief in a life to come may be the most potent of all agencies in repressing vice and stimulating virtue, the more must we recognise that this belief, as presented in the popular theology, has crystallised into a shape which much needs some salutary concussion. We do not want a languid belief in the reversion of a sincere

acquirable by conformity to a test; we want a conviction such as may make death even welcome, that death is but the entrance to a career of more joyful, because more strenuous, virtue. We need a widened and invigorated ideal of the spiritual universe through which we may one day wander. We need prophets, bold as the Hebrew, to secularise a conception of eternity which has become too exclusively hieratic; to illustrate with cogent vividness the solidarity of all attainable fragments of truth, to prepare that ultimate syncretism of all genuine faiths toward which, if we hope at all, we must hope that the world is tending.

Even those who still hold to Paul's watchword of "Christ and Resurrection" may feel, perhaps, that this process of expansion is a gain to all forms of religion alike,—and yet that it would scarcely have been urged forward so earnestly had not the faith in Christ and Resurrection been for a time impaired. They may admit that this also may be in the Providence of God, and that a temporary doubt as to the everlasting arms upholding us may be needed to teach us to put forth all the strength which is our own. Virgil compares the human race and its destiny to a rower struggling hopelessly against an opposing stream. Those who believe that the boat which carries man and his fortunes is in reality towed onwards by an unseen Power should listen, not with resentment, but with attentive interest, to their comrades who maintain that the tow-rope is swaying idly in the water, but

who yet feel confident that they can themselves propel the vessel. Perhaps that confidence is vain, but at least we should note how they apply their force, and unite in the strenuousness of their endeavour.

And how large a part of the most deeply-religious thought of recent years has been directed toward some such endeavour as this! How often will it be needful to seek the characteristic, the vital points of the theology of this century (as of many that have preceded it) in the writings of men who formed in their lifetime the standing targets of orthodox zeal! What future history of man's higher life can ignore that revival and systematisation of the instinct of human brotherhood which we owe to Comte and his disciples? What theory of man's duty to his Maker can forget Mill's noble conception of a Divinity wholly good, completely wise, but who nevertheless, as being not all-powerful, does actually need and rejoice in the help of His creatures towards the attainment of His glorious ends? What religious poetry of our century will sway men more profoundly than George Eliot's hymn of the Choir Invisible, whose impassioned expression of the absorption of personal in universal hope is not alien assuredly from the spirit of the apostle who was almost willing, for his converts' sake, himself to become a castaway? The list might easily be prolonged. But it could contain few voices better adapted to present needs than that of the author of *Natural Religion*, proclaiming that whether our eternal hope

is to subsist or fail, we must at any rate absorb as culture, reproduce as worship, the truths of science, the ideals of art, the sum of slowly-won and ever-spreading humanities which make for each nation severally its national and corporate soul and being, and constitute in the world at large the world-wide Church of civilisation.

It is true that those who cling to immortality as the world's one hope may naturally find something depressing in the visible spread of these efforts to conduct human life without it. Like Adam, at the first approach of night, they well may "tremble for this lovely frame," and cry aloud with terror at the advancing veil of shade. But to Adam, as we know, the darkness became revelation.

"Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
Aud lo ! creation widened in man's view."

The lights that rule the night may bestow no warmth with their illumination. Art, perhaps, may seem to us but a moonlight halo ; Science and Stoicism—the resolve to learn and to endure—may be but as *noctis signa severa*—night's austere constellations, enthroned in a frozen heaven. And yet that nocturnal outlook is the pre-requisite of almost all we know ; nor without the sun's withdrawal and obscurity could men truly have conceived the sun.

If the belief in a life to come should ever regain as

firm possession of men's mind as of old, that belief will surely be held in a nobler fashion. That life will be conceived not as a devotional exercise nor as a passive felicity, but as the prolongation of all generous energies, and the unison of all high desires. It may be that till we can thus apprehend it its glory must be hid from our eyes. Only, perhaps, when men have learnt that virtue is its own reward may they safely learn also that that reward is eternal.

ROSSETTI AND THE RELIGION OF BEAUTY.

AMONG those picturesque aspects of life which the advance of civilisation is tending to reduce to smoothness and uniformity we may include that hubbub and conflict which in rougher days used to salute the appearance of any markedly new influence in science, literature, or art. Prejudice—not long since so formidable and ubiquitous a giant—now shows sometimes little more vitality than Bunyan's Pope or Pagan; and the men who stone one of our modern prophets do it hurriedly, feeling that they may be interrupted at any moment by having to make arrangements for his interment in Westminster Abbey.

Now, while it would be absurd not to rejoice in this increasing receptivity of cultivated men—absurd to wish the struggle of genius sharper, or its recognition longer deferred—we may yet note one incidental advantage which belonged to the older *régime*. While victory was kept longer in doubt, and while the conflict was rougher, the advocates of a new cause felt a stronger obligation to master it in all its aspects,

and to set it forth with such exposition as might best prepare a place for it in ordinary minds. The merits of Wordsworth (to take an obvious instance) were long ignored by the public; but in the meantime his admirers had explained them so often and so fully that the recognition which was at last accorded to them was given *on* those merits, and not in mere deference to the authority of any esoteric circle.

The exhibition of Dante Rossetti's pictures which now (February 1883) covers the walls of Burlington House is the visible sign of the admission of a new strain of thought and emotion within the pale of our artistic orthodoxy. And since Rossetti's poetry expresses with singular exactness the same range of ideas as his painting, and is at any rate not inferior to his painting in technical skill, we may fairly say that his poetry also has attained hereby some sort of general recognition, and that the enthusiastic notices which appeared on his decease embodied a view of him to which the public is willing to some extent to defer.

Yet it hardly seems that enough has been done to make that deference spontaneous or intelligent. The students of Rossetti's poems—taking their tone from Mr. Swinburne's magnificent eulogy—have for the most part rather set forth their artistic excellence than endeavoured to explain their contents, or to indicate the relation of the poet's habit of thought and feeling to the ideas which Englishmen are accustomed to trust or admire. And consequently many critics, whose

ethical point of view demands respect, continue to find in Rossetti's works an enigma not worth the pains of solution, and to decry them as obscure, fantastic, or even as grossly immoral in tendency.

It will be the object of this essay—written from a point of view of by no means exclusive sympathy with the movement which Rossetti led—to show, in the first place, the great practical importance of that movement for good or evil; and, further, to trace such relations between this Religion of Art, this Worship of Beauty, and the older and more accredited manifestations of the Higher Life, as may indicate to the moralist on what points he should concentrate his efforts if, hopeless of withstanding the rising stream, he seeks at least to retain some power of deepening or modifying its channel.

From the æsthetic side such an attempt will be regarded with indifference, and from the ethical side with little hope. Even so bold a peacemaker as the author of *Natural Religion* has shrunk from this task; for the art which he admits as an element in his Church of Civilisation is an art very different from Rossetti's. It is an art manifestly untainted by sensuousness, manifestly akin to virtue; an art which, like Wordsworth's, finds its revelation in sea and sky and mountain rather than in "eyes which the sun-gate of the soul unbar," or in

"Such fire as Love's soul-winnowing hands distil,
Even from his inmost ark of light and dew."

Yet, however slight the points of contact between the ethical and the æsthetic theories of life may be, it is important that they should be noted and dwelt upon. For assuredly the "æsthetic movement" is not a mere fashion of the day—the modish pastime of nincompoops and charlatans. The imitators who surround its leaders, and whose jargon almost disgusts us with the very mysteries of art, the very vocabulary of emotion—these men are but the straws that mark the current, the inevitable parasites of a rapidly-rising cause. We have, indeed, only to look around us to perceive that—whether or not the conditions of the modern world are favourable to artistic *excellence*—all the main forces of civilisation are tending towards artistic *activity*. The increase of wealth, the diffusion of education, the gradual decline of the military, the hieratic, the aristocratic ideals—each of these causes removes some obstacle from the artist's path or offers some fresh prize to his endeavours. Art has outlived both the Puritans and the Inquisition; she is no longer deadened by the spirit of self-mortification, nor enslaved by a jealous orthodoxy. The increased wealth of the world makes the artist's life stable and secure, while it sets free a surplus income so large that an increasing share of it must almost necessarily be diverted to some form of æsthetic expenditure.

And more than this. It is evident, especially in new countries, that a need is felt of some kind of social distinction—some new aristocracy—based on

differences other than those of birth and wealth. Not, indeed, that rank and family are likely to cease to be held in honour; but, as power is gradually dissociated from them, they lose their exclusive predominance, and take their place on the same footing as other graces and dignities of life. Still less need we assume any slackening in the pursuit of riches; the fact being rather that this pursuit is so widely successful that in civilised capitals even immense opulence can now scarcely confer on its possessor all the distinction which he desires. In America, accordingly, where modern instincts find their freest field, we have before our eyes the process of the gradual distribution of the old prerogatives of birth amongst wealth, culture, and the proletariat. In Europe a class privileged by birth used to supply at once the rulers and the ideals of other men. In America the *rule* has passed to the multitude; largely swayed in subordinate matters by organised wealth, but in the last resort supreme. The *ideal* of the new community at first was Wealth; but, as its best literature and its best society plainly show, that ideal is shifting in the direction of Culture. The younger cities, the coarser classes, still bow down undisguisedly to the god Dollar; but when this Philistine deity is rejected as shaming his worshippers, æsthetic Culture seems somehow the only Power ready to instal itself in the vacant shrine.

And all over the world the spread of Science, the diffusion of Morality, tend in this same direction.

For the net result of Science and Morality for the mass of men is simply to give them comfort and leisure, to leave them cheerful, peaceful, and anxious for occupation. Nay, even the sexual instinct, as men become less vehement and unbridled, merges in larger and larger measure into the mere æsthetic enjoyment of beauty; till Stesichorus might now maintain with more truth than of old that our modern Helen is not herself fought for by two continents, but rather her εἶδωλον or image is blamelessly diffused over the albums of two hemispheres.

It is by no means clear that these modern conditions are favourable to the development either of the highest art or of the highest virtue. It is not certain even that they are permanent—that this æsthetic paradise of the well-to-do may not sometime be convulsed by an invasion from the rough world without. Meantime, however, it exists and spreads, and its leading figures exert an influence which few men of science, and fewer theologians, can surpass. And alike to *savant*, to theologian, and to moralist, it must be important to trace the workings of a powerful mind, concerned with interests which are so different from theirs, but which for a large section of society are becoming daily more paramount and engrossing.

“Under the arch of Life,” says Rossetti in a sonnet whose Platonism is the more impressive because probably unconscious—

“Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned ; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.”

Rossetti was ignorant of Greek, and it seems doubtful whether he knew Plato even by translations. But his idealising spirit has reproduced the myth of the *Phædrus*—even to the *τρέφεται καὶ εὖπαθεῖ*—the words that affirm the repose and well-being of the soul when she perceives beneath the arch of heaven the pure Idea which is at once her sustenance and her lord :—

“Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee ; which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.”

For Beauty, as Plato has told us, is of all the divine ideas at once most manifest and most loveable to men. When “Justice and Wisdom and all other things that are held in honour of souls” are hidden from the worshipper’s gaze, as finding no avenue of sense by which to reach him through the veil of flesh, Beauty has still some passage and entrance from mortal eyes to eyes, “and he that gazed so earnestly on what things in that holy place were to be seen, he when he discerns on earth some godlike countenance or fashion of body, that counterfeits Beauty well, first of all he trembles, and there comes over him something of the

fear which erst he knew; but then, looking on that earthly beauty, he worships it as divine, and if he did not fear the reproach of utter madness he would sacrifice to his heart's idol as to the image and presence of a god."

"This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
 Thy voice and hand shake still—long known to thee
 By flying hair and fluttering hem—the beat
 Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
 How passionately and irretrievably,
 In what fond flight, how many ways and days!"

There are some few hearts, no doubt, in which "sky and sea" and the face of Nature are able to inspire this yearning passion. But with this newer school—with Rossetti especially—we feel at once that Nature is no more than an accessory. The most direct appeals, the most penetrating reminiscences, come to the worshipper of Beauty from a woman's eyes. The steady rise in the status of women; that constant deepening and complication of the commerce between the sexes which is one of the signs of progressive civilisation; all this is perpetually teaching and preaching (if I may say so) the charms of womanhood to all sections of the community. What a difference in this respect has the century since Turner's birth made in England! If another Turner were born now—an eye which gazed, as it were, on a new-created planet from the very bedchamber and outgoing of the sun—can we suppose that such an

eye would still find its most attractive feminine type in the bumboats of Wapping? The anomaly, strange enough in Turner's day, is now inconceivable. Our present danger lies in just the opposite direction. We are in danger of losing that direct and straightforward outlook on human loveliness (of which Mr. Millais may serve as a modern example) which notes and represents the object with a frank enjoyment, and seeks for no further insight into the secret of its charm. All the arts, in fact, are returning now to the spirit of Leonardo, to the sense that of all visible objects known to us the human face and form are the most complex and mysterious, to the desire to extract the utmost secret, the occult message, from all the phenomena of Life and Being.

Now there is at any rate one obvious explanation of the sense of mystery which attaches to the female form. We may interpret it all as in some way a transformation of the sexual passion. This essentially materialistic view is surrounded with a kind of glamour by such writers as Gautier and Baudelaire. The tone of sentiment thus generated is repugnant—is sometimes even nauseating—to English feeling; but this tone of sentiment is certainly not Rossetti's. There is no trace in him of this deliberate worship of Baal and Ashtoreth; no touch of the cruelty which is the characteristic note of natures in which the sexual instincts have become haunting and dominant.

It is, indeed, at the opposite end of the scale—

among those who meet the mysteries of love and womanhood with a very different interpretation—that Rossetti's nearest affinities are to be found. It must not be forgotten that one of his most exquisite literary achievements consists in a translation of the *Vita Nuova* of Dante. Now, the *Vita Nuova*, to the vulgar reader a childish or meaningless tale, is to those who rightly apprehend it the very gospel and charter of mystical passion. When the child Dante trembles at the first sight of the child Beatrice; when the voice within him cries *Eccc deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi*; when that majestic spirit passes, at a look of the beloved one, through all the upward or downward trajectory between heaven and hell; this, indeed, is a love which appertains to the category of reasoned affections no more; its place is with the visions of saints, the intuitions of philosophers, in Plato's ideal world. It is recognised as a secret which none can hope to fathom till we can discern from some mount of unearthly vision what those eternal things were indeed to which somewhat in human nature blindly perceived itself akin.

The parallel between Rossetti and Dante must not be pushed too far. Rossetti is but as a Dante still in the *selva oscura*; he has not sounded hell so profoundly, nor mounted into heaven so high. He is not a prophet but an artist; yet an artist who, both by the very intensity of his artistic vision, and by some inborn bent towards symbol and mysticism, stands on the

side of those who see in material things a spiritual significance, and utters words of universal meaning from the fulness of his own heart. Yet he is, it must be repeated, neither prophet, philosopher, nor saint. The basis of his love is the normal emotion—"the delight in beauty alloyed with appetite, and strengthened by the alloy;"—and although that love has indeed learned, in George Eliot's words, to "acknowledge an effect from the imagined light of unproven firmaments, and have its scale set to the grander orbit of what hath been and shall be," this transfiguration is effected not so much by any elevation of ethical feeling, as by the mere might and potency of an ardent spirit which projects itself with passionate intensity among things unreachable and unknown. To him his beloved one seems not as herself alone, "but as the meaning of all things that are;" her voice recalls a prenatal memory, and her eyes "dream against a distant goal." We hear little of the intellectual aspects of passion, of the subtle interaction of one character on another, of the modes in which Love possesses himself of the eager or the reluctant heart. In these poems the lovers have lost their idiosyncrasies; they are made at one for ever; the two streams have mingled only to become conscious that they are being drawn together into a boundless sea. Nay, the very passion which serves to unite them, and which is sometimes dwelt on with an Italian emphasis of sensuousness which our English reserve condemns, tends oftener to

merge itself in the mystic companionship which holds the two souls together in their enchanted land.

“ One flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player
 Even where my lady and I lay all alone ;
 Saying : ‘ Behold, this minstrel is unknown ;
 Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here ;
 Only my strains are to Love’s dear ones dear.’
 Then said I : ‘ Through thine haut-boy’s rapturous tone
 Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,
 And still she deems the cadence deep and clear.’

“ Then said my lady : ‘ Thou art Passion of Love,
 And this Love’s Worship ; both he plights to me
 Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea ;
 But where wan water trembles in the grove,
 And the wan moon is all the light thereof,
 This harp still makes my name its Voluntary.’ ”

The voluntaries of the white-winged harp-player do not linger long among the accidents of earth ; they link with the beloved name all “ the soul’s sphere of infinite images,” all that she finds of benign or wondrous “ amid the bitterness of things occult.” And as the lover moves amid these mysteries it appears to him that Love is the key which may unlock them all. For the need is not so much of an intellectual insight as of an elevation of the whole being—a rarefaction, as it were, of man’s spirit which Love’s pure fire effects, and which enables it to penetrate more deeply into the ideal world.

In that thin air Love undergoes a yet further

transformation. The personal element, already sublimed into a mystic companionship, retires into the background. The lover is now, in Plato's words, ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ πέλαιγος τετραμμένος τοῦ καλοῦ; he has set sail upon the ocean of Beauty, and Love becomes the ἑρμηνεῦον καὶ διαπορθμεῦον, the "interpreter and mediator between God and man," through whom the true prayer passes and the true revelation is made.

"Not I myself know all my love for thee :

How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh

To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday ?

✱

Shall birth and death, and all dark names that be

As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,

Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray ;

And shall my sense pierce love—the last relay

And ultimate outpost of eternity ?"

For thus, indeed, is Love discerned to be something which lies beyond the region of this world's wisdom or desire—something out of proportion to earthly needs and to causes that we know. Here is the point where the lover's personality seems to be exalted to its highest, and at the same moment to disappear ; as he perceives that his individual emotion is merged in the flood and tideway of a cosmic law :—

"Lo ! what am I to Love, the lord of all ?

One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand—

One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.

Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call

And veriest touch of powers primordial

That any hour-girt life may understand."

Alas! this call, by its very nature, is heard in one heart alone; this "touch of powers primordial" is intransferable to other souls. The eyes which, to the lover's vision,

"The sun-gate of the soul unbar,
Being of its furthest fires oracular,"

can send this message to the world only through sign and symbol; the "bower of unimagined flower and tree" is fashioned by Love in such hearts only as he has already made his own.

And thus it is that so much of Rossetti's art, in speech or colour, spends itself in the effort to communicate the incommunicable. It is toward "the vale of magical dark mysteries" that those grave low-hanging brows are bent, and "vanished hours and hours eventual" brood in the remorseful gaze of Pandora, the yearning gaze of Proserpine. The pictures that perplex us with their obvious incompleteness, their new and haunting beauty, are not the mere caprices of a richly-dowered but wandering spirit. Rather they may be called (and none the less so for their shortcomings) the sacred pictures of a new religion; forms and faces which bear the same relation to that mystical worship of Beauty on which we have dwelt so long, as the forms and faces of a Francia or a Leonardo bear to the mediæval mysteries of the worship of Mary or of Christ. And here it is that in Rossetti's pictures we find ourselves in the midst of a novel symbolism—a symbolism genuine and deeply

felt as that of the fifteenth century, and using once more birds and flowers and stars, colours and lights of the evening or the dawn, to tell of beauties impalpable, spaces unfathomed, the setting and resurrection of no measurable or earthly day.

It is chiefly in a series of women's faces that these ideas seek expression. All these have something in common, some union of strange and puissant physical loveliness with depth and remoteness of gaze. They range from demon to angel—as such names may be interpreted in a Religion of Beauty—from Lilith, whose beauty is destruction, and Astarte, throned between the Sun and Moon in her sinister splendour, to the *Blessed Damozel* and the “maiden pre-elect,” type of the love whose look regenerates and whose assumption lifts to heaven. But all have the look—characteristic of Rossetti's faces as the mystic smile of Leonardo's—the look which bids the spectator murmur—

“What netherworld gulf-whispers doth she hear,
In answering echoes from what planisphere,
Along the wind, along the estuary?”

And since these primal impulses, at any rate, will remain to mankind, since Love's pathway will be trodden by many a generation, and all of faith or knowledge to which that pathway leads will endure, it is no small part of the poet's function to show in how great a measure Love does actually pre-suppose

and consist of this exaltation of the mystic element in man; and how the sense of unearthly destinies may give dignity to Love's invasion, and steadfastness to his continuance, and surround his vanishing with the mingled ecstasy of anguish and of hope. Let us trace, with Rossetti, some stages of his onward way.

The inexplicable suddenness with which Love will sometimes possess himself of two several hearts—finding a secret kinship which, like a common aroma, permeates the whole being of each—has often suggested the thought that such companionship is not in reality now first begun; that it is founded in a prenatal affection, and is the unconscious prolongation of the emotions of an ideal world—

“Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,
That among souls allied to mine was yet
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.
O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!”

It is thus that Rossetti traces backward the kindling of the earthly flame. And he feels also that if love be so pervading, so fateful a thing, the man who takes it upon him has much to fear. He moves among great risks; “the moon-track of the journeying face of Fate” is subject for him to strange perturbations, to terrible eclipse. What if his love be a mistake? — if he feels against his will a disenchantment stealing over the enchanted garden, and his new self

walking, a ghastly intruder, among scenes vainly consecrated by an illusive past?

“Whence came his feet into my field, and why?
How is it that he finds it all so drear?
How do I see his seeing, and how hear
The name his bitter silence knows it by?”

Or what of him for whom some unforgotten hour has marred his life's best felicity, *et inquinavit aere tempus aureum*? What of the recollection that chills his freest moments with an inward and icy breath?

“Look in my face, my name is Might-have-been;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell.”

There is no need to invite attention to the lines which thus begin. They will summon their own auditors; they will not die till that inward Presence dies also, and there sits not at the heart of any man a memory deeper than his joy.

But over all lovers, however wisely they may love, and well, there hangs one shadow which no wisdom can avert. To one or other the shock must come, the separation which will make the survivor's after-life seem something posthumous, and its events like the changes in a dream.

Without intruding into the private story of a life which has not yet been authoritatively recounted to us, we may recognise that on Rossetti the shock of severance, of bereavement, must have fallen with desolating force. In several of his most pregnant poems,—

in the sonnets entitled *Willow-wood* most of all,—those who know the utmost anguish of yearning have listened to a voice speaking as though from their own hearts. The state of tension, indeed, which finds utterance in these sonnets is by its very nature transitory. There comes a time when most men forget. But in some hearts the change which comes over the passion of love is not decay, but transfiguration. That passion is generalised, as Plato desired that it should be generalised, though in a somewhat different way. The Platonic enthusiasm of admiration was to extend itself “from one fair form to all fair forms,” and from fair forms to noble and beautiful ideas and actions, and all that is likest God. And something not unlike this takes place when the lover feels that the object of his earthly worship, now removed from his sight, is becoming identified for him with all else that he has been wont to revere—representative to him, to use Plato’s words again, “of those things, by dwelling on which it is that even a god is divine.” It is not, indeed, the bereaved lover only who finds in a female figure the ideal recipient of his impulses of adoring love. Of how many creeds has this been the inspiring element!—from the painter who invokes upon his canvas a Virgin revealed in sleep, to the philosopher who preaches the worship of Humanity in a woman’s likeness, to be at once the Mother and the Beloved of all. Yet this ideal will operate most actively in hearts which can give to that celestial vision a remembered

reality, whose "memorial threshold" seems visibly to bridge the passage between the transitory and the supernal world.

"City, of thine a single simple door,
By some new Power reduplicate, must be
Even yet my life-porch in eternity,
Even with one presence filled, as once of yore ;
Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strewn floor
Thee and thy years and these my words and me."

And if sometimes this transmuted passion—this religion of beauty spiritualised into a beatific dream—should prompt to quietism rather than to vigorous action,—if sometimes we hear in the mourner's utterance a tone as of a man too weak for his destiny—this has its pathos too. For it is a part of the lot of man that the fires which purify should also consume him, and that as the lower things become distasteful the energy which seeks the higher things should fade too often into a sad repose.

"Here with her face doth Memory sit,
Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,
Till other eyes shall look from it—
Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,
Even than the old gaze tenderer ;
While hopes and aims, long lost with her,
Stand round her image side by side,
Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
About the Holy Sepulchre."

And when the dream and the legend which inspired

Rossetti's boyhood with the vision of the *Blessed Damozel*—which kindled his early manhood into the sweetest *Ave* that ever saluted "Mary Virgin, full of grace"—had transformed themselves in his heart into the reality and the recollection; when Love had been made known to him by life itself and death—then he had at least gained power to show how the vaguer worship may become a concentrated expectancy: how one vanished hand may seem to offer the endless welcome, one name to symbolise all heaven, and to be in itself the single hope.

"Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
 Between the scripted petals softly blown
 Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—
 Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er,
 But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
 Not less nor more, but e'en that word alone."

Enough, perhaps, has been said to indicate not only how superficial is the view which represents Rossetti as a dangerous sensualist, but also how inadequately we shall understand him if we think to find in him only the commonplaces of passion dressed out in fantastic language and Italianised allegory. There is more to be learnt from him than this, though it be too soon, as yet, to discern with exactness his place in the history of our time. Yet we may note that his sensitive and reserved individuality; his life, absorbed in Art, and aloof from—without being below—the circles of politics or fashion; his refinement, created as it

were from within, and independent of conventional models, point him out as a member of that new aristocracy of which we have already spoken, that *optimacy* of passion and genius (if we may revive an obsolete word to express a new shade of meaning) which is coming into existence as a cosmopolitan gentility among the confused and fading class-distinctions of the past. And, further, we may observe in him the reaction of Art against Materialism, which becomes more marked as the dominant tone of science grows more soulless and severe. The instincts which make other men Catholics, Ritualists, Hegelians, have compelled him, too, to seek "the meaning of all things that are" elsewhere than in the behaviour of ether and atoms, though we can track his revelation to no source more explicit than the look in a woman's eyes.

But if we ask—and it was one of the questions with which we started—what encouragement the moralist can find in this counter-wave of art and mysticism which meets the materialistic tide, there is no certain or easy answer. The one view of life seems as powerless as the other to supply that antique and manly virtue which civilisation tends to undermine by the lessening effort that it exacts of men, the increasing enjoyment that it offers to them. "Time has run back and fetched the age of gold," in the sense that the opulent can now take life as easily as it was taken in Paradise; and Rossetti's poems, placed beside Sidney's or Lovelace's, seem the expression of a century

which is refining itself into quietism and mellowing into decay.

Yet thus much we may safely affirm, that if we contrast æstheticism with pure hedonism—the pursuit of pleasure through art with the pursuit of pleasure simply as pleasure—the one has a tendency to quicken and exalt, as the other to deaden and vulgarise, the emotions and appetencies of man. If only the artist can keep clear of the sensual selfishness which will, in its turn, degrade the art which yields to it; if only he can worship beauty with a strong and single heart, his emotional nature will acquire a grace and elevation which are not, indeed, identical with the elevation of virtue, the grace of holiness, but which are none the less a priceless enrichment of the complex life of man. Rossetti could never have summoned us to the clear heights of Wordsworth's *Laodamia*. Yet who can read the *House of Life* and not feel that the poet has known Love as Love can be—not an enjoyment only or a triumph, but a worship and a regeneration; Love not fleeting nor changeful, but “far above all passionate winds of welcome and farewell;” Love offering to the soul no mere excitation and by-play, but “a heavenly solstice, hushed and halcyon;” Love whose “hours elect in choral consonancy” bear with them nothing that is vain or vulgar, common or unclean. He must have felt as no passing tragedy the long ache of parted pain, “the ground-whirl of the perished leaves of hope,” “the sunset’s desolate dis-

array," the fruitless striving "to wrest a bond from night's inveteracy," to behold "for once, for once alone," the unforgotten eyes re-risen from the dark of death.

Love, as Plato said, is the *ἐρμηνεύων καὶ διαπορθμεύων*, "the interpreter and mediator" between things human and things divine ; and it may be to Love that we must look to teach the worshipper of Beauty that the highest things are also the loveliest, and that the strongest of moral agencies is also the most pervading and keenest joy. Art and Religion, which no compression could amalgamate, may by Love be expanded and interfused ; and thus the poet may not err so wholly who seeks in a woman's eyes "the meaning of all things that are ;" and "the soul's sphere of infinite images" may not be a mere prismatic fringe to reality, but rather those images may be as dark rays made visible by passing through the medium of a mind which is fitted to refract and reflect them.

A faint, a fitful reflex ! Whether it be from light of sun or of moon, *sole repperussum aut radiantis imagine lunae*,—the glimmer of a vivifying or of a phantom day — may scarcely be for us to know. But never yet has the universe been proved smaller than the conceptions of man, whose farthest, deepest speculation has only found *within* him yet profounder abysses,—*without*, a more unfathomable heaven.

NOTES.

NOTE A.

Since the publication of the first edition of these Essays, an admirable study of French versification has appeared from the pen of M. Guyau, in the *Revue Philosophique* for 1884, under the title of 'L'Esthétique du vers Moderne.' This paper, far more philosophical than any French writings on the subject which I had previously seen, suggests much which might be added to my discussion, did space permit. Fortunately, however, so far as my own remarks go, they are thoroughly in accordance with M. Guyau's more authoritative opinion.

1885.

NOTE B.

The letters of George Eliot which have recently been given to the world confirm the view above expressed as to the predominance in her of the *ethical* impulse. Not even the one grave moral mistake into which a wave of theoretical opinion rather than of personal passion carried her, can seriously interfere with the impression which the records of her whole life produce, —the picture of untiring self-improvement, of strenuous well-doing. The letters are as far removed as possible from either the recklessness or the self-absorption which sometimes accompany imaginative genius. Rather we find a temper as of one resolved to treat the whole of life scientifically, and not *en amateur*, —a voice whose stern self-communings seem overheard in the heart's secret chamber, and bid us to redeem the time because the days are evil.

1885.

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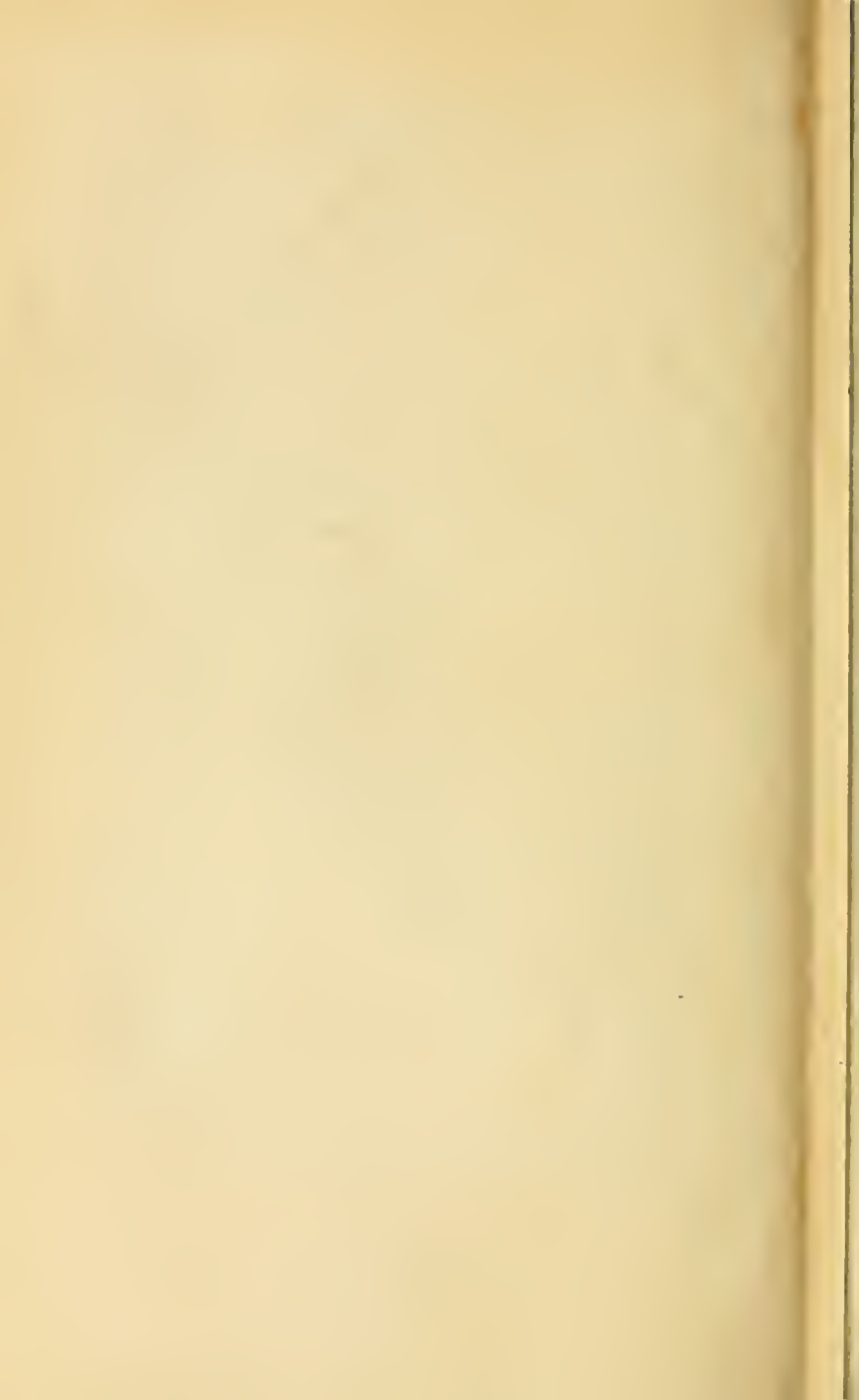
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